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Virgil's Ascanius

Imagining the Future in the Aeneid

ANNE ROGERSON

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VIRGIL'S ASCANIUS

Ascanius is the most prominent child hero in Virgil's *Aeneid*. He accompanies his father from Troy to Italy and is present from the first book of the epic to the last; he is destined to found the city of Alba Longa and the Julian family to which Caesar and Augustus both belonged; he hunts, he fights, he makes speeches, and he even makes a joke. In the first book-length study of Virgil's Ascanius, Anne Rogerson demonstrates the importance of this character not just to the Augustan family tree but to the texture and the meaning of the *Aeneid*. As a figure of prophecy and a symbol both of hopes for the future and of present uncertainties, Ascanius is a fusion of epic and dynastic desires. Compelling close readings of the representation and reception of this understudied character throughout the *Aeneid* expose the unexpectedly childish qualities of Virgil's heroic epic.

ANNE ROGERSON is the Charles Tesoriero Senior Lecturer in Latin at the University of Sydney. She has published numerous articles on the *Aeneid* and its reception, and is also a regular contributor to Richard Glover's Drive programme on ABC radio, as a guest speaker and ancient world expert in the 'Self-Improvement Wednesday' series.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book began as a PhD dissertation at the University of Cambridge, supervised by Philip Hardie and Emily Gowers. I am extremely grateful to them both for their care and advice throughout my candidature and in the years that have followed. I would also like to take the opportunity here to thank others who have read the manuscript in its entirety. My examiners, Stephen Harrison and John Henderson, were challenging and encouraging readers; Stephen Oakley and the anonymous reviewers of the Press have been scrupulous and attentive; Margaret Rogerson and Daniel Anlezark have helped to shape and refine the argument in innumerable ways, as well as acting as proofreaders extraordinaire.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ascanius. He has been an inspiration and mentor and I will always be grateful for the enthusiasm and kindness that he and my other undergraduate lecturers have shown me.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Aen.</i>	<i>Aeneid</i>
<i>Anth. Pal.</i>	<i>Anthologia Palatina</i>
Dion. Hal., <i>Ant. Rom.</i>	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>Antiquitates Romanae</i>
<i>FGrH</i>	Jacoby, F. 1923–. <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker.</i> Berlin: Weidmann
<i>LIMC</i>	1981–2009. <i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae.</i> Zürich: Artemis
<i>OLD</i>	Glare, P. G. W. 2012. <i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> , 2nd edn. Oxford University Press
<i>TLL</i>	1900–. <i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae.</i> Leipzig: Teubner

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ascanius, the infant prince snatched from the flames of a defeated Troy, is the *Aeneid*'s smallest hero, but his part in the story that looks forward to the birth of Rome and the boundless growth of Rome's empire has large implications. This book argues that he raises a series of significant questions about the future, and not only because – as a child, as his father's putative successor and as the ancestor of an important Roman *gens* – he himself represents the glories to come after the *Aeneid*. Rather, Virgil uses Ascanius to hint at the manifold difficulties associated with looking forward beyond the present. These difficulties affect not only the poet's contemporary readers in Rome (and indeed his later readers in and outside Rome as well) but also the narrative itself and the characters who toil in it towards the destinies that might be divinely ordained but remain opaque, at least to them. Further, Ascanius is used in this way despite the fact, paradoxically, that his own future, so long in the past when Virgil was writing, might have seemed fixed.

When the *Aeneid* focuses on Ascanius and shows us other characters looking at him too, it is very often the uncertainty, the contingency and the malleability of the future that are stressed as the various perspectives the text offers on Aeneas' small son reveal how views of the future are shaped by different desires and competing agendas. At the same time, being a figure closely associated not only with the Roman future but also with the Trojan past, which the *Aeneid* suggests must, to a certain extent at least, be left behind to ensure the glories that lie ahead, this symbol of the future is threatened by (and potentially a threat to) the evolution of that very future. All this makes Ascanius an important and complicating factor when we consider the issues of continuity and change that are central to Virgil's epic. We come to see that he is potentially too Trojan to inhabit in any comfort the proto-Roman

world to which the poem looks forward and which he, supposedly, stands for, and that he is invested not only with a sense of hope for the future but also its deep anxieties. And as the *Aeneid* traces his striving towards an adulthood that is several times frustrated and never properly achieved, Ascanius provides a way of thinking about the operation of the text itself, an epic which is notoriously plagued by delays, and which reaches yearningly beyond the constraints of its own, in some ways inconclusive, ending towards an ideal never achieved, and quite possibly unachievable.

Large questions await, but I begin with something smaller, an iconic scene that stresses Ascanius' diminutive size and encapsulates much of the standard view held, both in antiquity and today, of Virgil's youngest hero. In it, still a small child, Ascanius clings to Aeneas' hand and follows in his footsteps as he escapes from the burning city of his ancestors. When Aeneas tells the story to Dido in Carthage, he emphasises his son's diminutive size (*parvus Iulus*, 723) and suggests both that Ascanius' infant legs make his steps shorter than his father's and that he might be stumbling slightly as he hurries to keep up (*non passibus aequis*, 724):¹

'haec fatus latos umeros subiectaque colla
veste super fulvique insternor pelle leonis
succedoque oneri; dextrae se parvus Iulus
implicuit sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis;
pone subit coniunx.' (*Aeneid* 2.721–5)

'Having said these things, I cloak my broad shoulders and bent neck with the covering above of a tawny lion's pelt, and take on the burden of my father; having attached himself to my right hand, little Ascanius follows his father with unequal steps; my wife comes along behind.'

This is the picture of Ascanius that dominated the ancient world from the late sixth century BCE, when black figure vases first show him accompanying his father on the flight from Troy.² It became even commoner after the *forum Augustum* was officially dedicated in 2 BCE. In it was a statue of Aeneas fleeing Troy, bearing his father Anchises and his ancestral gods on his back and

¹ I use the Teubner edition of the *Aeneid*: Conte 2011. Translations of the *Aeneid* and all other texts are my own throughout.

² LIMC II.1 Askanios: 2–3.

grasping Ascanius by the hand, standing prominently in one of the two large exedrae, and mirrored by a statue of Romulus carrying the *spolia opima* in the other.³ The grouping was replicated in art throughout the empire in representations of the escape from Troy; it appears in free-standing statues, on vases, jewels, medallions and coins, as well as in paintings, reliefs and mosaics.⁴ These images look back to the iconography of the *forum Augustum* but also reflect the Virgilian scene, which clearly influenced the development and standardisation throughout the ancient world of depictions of Aeneas' escape from Troy with his family.⁵

In this group, Ascanius wears the clothing of an oriental prince, including the *mitra* or headdress seen as characteristic of the East. He thus acts as a visible reminder of the Trojan world from which Aeneas has come, while Aeneas himself, garbed like a Roman soldier, is dressed to reflect both the Roman race that he is to found in Italy and the Roman values that he demonstrates in saving his family and his gods from Troy's destruction. The scene is a paradigm of the *pietas* for which Aeneas was renowned,⁶ and came to be seen as proof of that virtue, ensuring Aeneas' inclusion as one of the first entries in a second-century CE list of men who 'had been exceptionally *pious*' (*qui piissimi fuerunt*):⁷

In Sicilia cum Aetna mons primum ardere coepit, Damon matrem suam ex igne rapuit, item Phintia patrem. Aeneas item in Illo Anchisem patrem umeris et Ascanium filium ex incendio eripuit. (Hyginus, *Fabulae* 254)

When Mt. Etna in Sicily first started to blaze, Damon snatched his mother away from the conflagration and his father Phintias as well. In the same way Aeneas in Troy snatched his son Ascanius from the fires and his father Anchises on his shoulders.

³ P. Zanker 1988, fig. 149. The statue of Aeneas, his father and Ascanius is mentioned in Ovid's description of the *forum Augustum*, *Fasti* 5.563–4. See also Chaplin 2000: 174–6; J. D. Evans 1992: 109–18; Severy 2003: 165–80.

⁴ LIMC 1.1 Aineais: 97–113, 118–26, 132, 135–42, 145–51, 153, 159. The evolution and spread of this image is discussed by M. J. Anderson 1997: 206–7; Battistoni 2010: 43, 131–3; Rawson 2003: 32–4; Severy 2003: 70–3; Sinn 2006; Spannagel 1999: 103–11; Spinazzola 1953: 150–5.

⁵ See further below, p. 16.

⁶ P. Zanker 1988: 202, 210.

⁷ For the text see Marshall 1993. For the act as a demonstration of Aeneas' *pietas*, see also Ovid, *Fasti* 1.527–8.

As Hyginus' summary highlights, in this dramatic vignette Ascanius and his grandfather Anchises function primarily as appendages to Aeneas, allowing the hero to demonstrate the qualities that make him the proper founder of the Roman race, one too young and the other too old to display such heroism themselves.

Virgil's Ascanius has often been seen similarly as 'a peripheral figure with only occasional effect on the narrative',⁸ peripheral both because of his youth and because the text's real hero is his father. Indeed, the only previous book-length study of Ascanius' role in the *Aeneid* focuses on what the portrayal of the prince reveals about Aeneas, deflecting attention from the boy to his father.⁹ This book, by contrast, argues that Ascanius matters for other reasons as well. It is true that Ascanius' youth is a significant element of his presentation throughout the *Aeneid*, where he is often described as a child, and is called 'little' (*parvus*) on four other occasions during the fall of Troy in Book Two.¹⁰ However, while this may necessarily limit the practical contribution he can make to an epic narrative in which adult masculinity is an essential and defining element of the genre,¹¹ it by no means renders him insignificant. Indeed, the fact that Virgil's Ascanius is never a man, but wants to be one, is one reason that his representation is so important in the *Aeneid*, allowing us a unique perspective on the aspirational masculinity of the epic. In addition, Ascanius' childishness makes him vulnerable, and in doing so points to another significant aspect of his portrayal in the text. When we see little Ascanius stumbling from Troy's conflagration, we are reminded of the other small children who do not survive the last days of Priam's city,¹² and of the fact that the *Aeneid* generally

⁸ Petrini 1997: 87.

⁹ Ross 1977.

¹⁰ *parvus*: *Aen.* 2.563, 674, 677, 710. Also 'beardless' (*impuis*): *Aen.* 5.546. His childishness is stressed repeatedly with the noun *puer* and cognate adjective *puerilis*: *Aen.* 1.267; 2.598; 3.339, 341; 4.156, 354; 5.74, 548, 569, 599; 9.641; 10.236, 605; 12.435.

¹¹ Hinds 2000. See also Pratt 2007: 25 on the incongruous presence of children in the *Iliad*'s world of 'war and sex'.

¹² Sons of Laocoon: *Aen.* 2.213–15; grandson of Panthus: *Aen.* 2.320–1. Panthus' grandson is, like Ascanius, held by the hand as his grandfather clutches Troy's conquered gods and sacred objects and tries to flee: we do not hear of him again. On the overlap between this escape attempt and Aeneas' iconic flight, see Horsfall 2008, *ad loc.* Cf. also the little son of Aeneas, whom Dido wishes for: *Aen.* 4.328–9, with Casali 2004–5: 147–53 on

proves terminal for its young heroes.¹³ Little Ascanius, however, must survive, if for no other reason than that he is the eponymous ancestor of the *gens Iulia*, from which are to spring the dictator Julius Caesar and his adopted son, who would become Rome's first emperor, Augustus. Virgil's Ascanius in this way is a paradox, put repeatedly at risk by the same narrative that insists on the necessity of his escape from danger. He is a counterfactual figure in such moments, a reminder of the vulnerability of the narrative itself, a story which so easily could have turned out differently. And we should not feel complacent about his survival: we will see not only that it is genuinely imperilled but also that survival beyond the end of the epic will not guarantee a cessation of the threats that trouble the future of the young Trojan prince.

Those threats have to do with an as-yet unborn younger brother who will act as a rival to Ascanius' place as his father's successor, and will be addressed in more detail later. It is important to note here, however, that the vignette with which we started, where the little Ascanius followed after the heroic and pious Aeneas, not only marks him as secondary to his father, but also presents him as an important symbol of succession.¹⁴ This message was emphasised in the *forum Augustum*, where an independent statue of Ascanius also stood among a row of Alban kings and members of the *gens Iulia* that flanked the larger representation of his escape from Troy with his father and grandfather in the northern exedra, like ancestral *imagines* in a Roman *atrium*.¹⁵ It is from this dynastic and political perspective that it can be argued that Ascanius is 'the most important character in the poem' even by those who see him as peripheral in other respects.¹⁶ Moreover, he represents not only Rome's future rulers but, more generally, what

the implicit dangers to this child; and the little Trojan companions of Ascanius during the *lusus Troiae*: *Aen.* 5.563–5, 568–9, on whose survival and repression see Gowers 2011: 112–13.

¹³ Block 1980: 130; Petriani 1997: 8, 95. Golden 1990 notes on children in Greek literature: 'the child is seldom a symbol of what is to come ... when, as rarely, he is, the future hopes he represents are often unrealised' (7).

¹⁴ Baroin 2010: 32–6.

¹⁵ Flower 1996: 224–36; Severy 2003: 165–80. On the strong dynastic programme of the *forum Augustum*, see also Spannagel 1999: 256–358.

¹⁶ Petriani 1997: 87.

is perhaps the most important desire in the *Aeneid*, the guarantee of a future in which the young do not die and it is possible to bring up one's sons. We can see this hope again and again throughout the text, especially in a number of passages to which I will return in subsequent chapters: in Jupiter's promises in Book One of a steady cycle of generations leading from Aeneas to Augustan Rome; in Andromache and Helenus' barren settlement at Buthrotum; in Latinus' hopes for descendants to glorify his name; and in the grief at the deaths of Marcellus, Lausus and Pallas, Ascanius' doomed counterparts. It is also clearly apparent in the simile which compares Vulcan, rising in the small hours to work on the shield which will display Rome's future glories, to a diligent housewife starting the day before the sun rises so that 'she might be able to rear her little sons' (*possit parvos educere natos*, *Aen.* 8.413). The survival of children is an ideal closely linked both to the figure of Ascanius and the Roman future he represents, and he is therefore significant not only because of his Julian descendants but, even more, because he himself provides us with a model of succession.

The figure of Ascanius following Aeneas during the escape from Troy was picked up by later Roman writers who also, in various ways, were interested in succession as an idea and an aspiration. Thus in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, Claudius is imagined limping up to heaven 'with unequal steps' (*non passibus aequis*, 1.2),¹⁷ taking the same path that the deified Augustus and Tiberius took before him. And at the end of Statius' *Thebaid*, his epic is enjoined to 'follow after the *Aeneid* at a distance and forever worship its footsteps' (*longe sequere et vestigia semper adora*, *Thebaid* 12.817).¹⁸ In both cases, secondariness is the key theme: the lame and stuttering Claudius is a disappointing, and risible, successor to the earlier emperors, while Statius' *Thebaid* marks its deference to the *Aeneid* even as it reworks one of its defining images.¹⁹ Similarly, when the image is reversed, and one character follows another with equal steps rather than 'unequal'

¹⁷ Eden 1984.

¹⁸ Hill 1996.

¹⁹ Hinds 1998: 91–8.

ones, it is not just the length of their stride that matches up: the suggestion is that they are worthy to be considered as their companion's equals more generally.²⁰ Intrinsic inferiority and a concomitant (if hopeless) desire not to be inferior are closely linked in this iconic image of the flight from Troy, which gestures both towards the qualities and aspirations of the characters themselves and – as most clearly articulated by Statius – the nature of the stories that are told about them, their fittingness to be part of the genre into which they stride, or stumble.

Such innate lack, moreover, is characteristic of children in the Roman imagination, where they are consistently represented as deficient versions of adults.²¹ Insufficient not only in stature, strength and understanding, but also in self-control and in seriousness, children must leave behind and grow beyond these characteristics in order to reach adulthood.²² In ancient epic, such coming of age is often marked – as is the case for Ascanius as well – by killing, whether of animals in the hunt or warriors in battle. The *Odyssey* shows us both possibilities. Odysseus' scar is a permanent reminder of the boar hunt that served as his transition into adulthood.²³ His son Telemachus, who strives to grow up during the narrative, in the end almost matches up to his father in his ability to shoot Odysseus' impossibly mighty bow and by partaking in the slaughter of his mother's suitors.²⁴ Ascanius, as we will see, enjoys a similar moment of initiation when he kills the Italian warrior Numanus Remulus, though his coming of age is immediately compromised by the god Apollo, who intervenes to keep him safely segregated from the adult world of the battlefield. We should also note, however, that the very act of killing in such narratives, and in the *Aeneid* no less than other epics, tends to show us adult warriors regressing towards childhood, in the sense that they often lose the self-control that ideally should characterise their grown-up status. At the end of

²⁰ Aeneas follows the Sibyl into the underworld, matching her as she goes with bold strides (*ille ducem haud timidus vadentem passibus aequat*, *Aen.* 6.263). Claudian's Persephone can equal Venus and Diana step for step (*aequali ... passu, de Raptu Proserpinae* 2.37), on which see Gruzeliér 1993.

²¹ Golden 1990: 1–22; Laes 2011: 77–99.

²² Néraudau 1984: 89–98; Rawson 2003: 134–45.

²³ Homer, *Odyssey* 19.386–466.

²⁴ Homer, *Odyssey* 21.124–35; 22.91–8.

the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is famously inflamed by rage (*furiis accensus*, *Aen.* 12.946), and we will see that his son Ascanius displays a similar tendency for lack of self-restraint, particularly in the second half of the epic as he moves closer towards adulthood. In part as a consequence of being a figure for succession, Ascanius is also a figure for initiation, and thus a focus for some difficult questions about what it might mean to be an adult hero, and whether the ideals associated with this status are achievable. His hesitant steps towards adulthood mark him on the one hand as inferior to his father but also allow us to question whether the forward movement implicit in initiations is as one-directional as it might seem.

Both peripheral and vitally important, acutely vulnerable yet a survivor, a symbol both of the future and of the past, of succession and of its problems, of initiation and its failures, it is unsurprising that Virgil's Ascanius has attracted radically different interpretations. Recently he has been described by one commentator as 'one of the most puzzling characters in the *Aeneid* – and ... one of the least attractive'.²⁵ To others, he has been much more appealing: 'as real as the boy next door ... a lovely child'.²⁶ To one he is 'an agent of chaos',²⁷ to another 'a concrete representation of optimism'.²⁸ He has been identified as the 'great hope of the Trojans',²⁹ but the same scholar who sees him as an agent of chaos also stresses that the hope he offers is qualified: 'Ascanius' presence promises that there will be a future, but the happiness and security that the Trojan refugees dream of can be compromised by human folly, childish enthusiasm and heedless selfishness'.³⁰ While, as we have already seen, he can be described as 'a peripheral figure with only occasional effect on the narrative and with little characterization',³¹ another reader can claim that 'in spite of his youth his rôle is one of great action',³² and yet another stresses

²⁵ Armstrong 2005: 8.

²⁶ R. E. Coleman 1942–3: 146. Similar views on the representation of Ascanius as lifelike and charming are expressed by Heinze 1993: 128–9; Manson 1981: 62–3.

²⁷ Merriam 2002: 852.

²⁸ Feldman 1952–3: 306–7.

²⁹ Bishop 1988: 291.

³⁰ Merriam 2002: 860.

³¹ Petrini 1997: 87.

³² Moseley 1926: 47.

the ‘psychological realism’ of his portrayal.³³ It has even been suggested that Virgil’s double-named Ascanius shows signs of a split personality, a vestigial indication in the *Aeneid* of rival histories where ‘Ascanius’ and ‘Iulus’ were two separate individuals.³⁴

Every reader’s Ascanius will be different, and I do not intend to argue here for either his charm or his unattractiveness. I am interested instead in ways in which he is presented to readers, and I will argue that Virgil’s representation of Ascanius in fact encourages such diversity of opinion, in much the same way as the *Aeneid* as a whole speaks with many voices and problematises black-and-white interpretation of its narrative and of its ending.³⁵ As I trace Virgil’s portrayal of Ascanius, I am interested partly in how intertexts with earlier works help us to understand the figure and function of Aeneas’ son: Homeric epic in particular offers Virgil a model to think with and to argue against, and his engagement with earlier literature is an important strand in the creation of meaning in the *Aeneid*.³⁶ I am even more interested, however, in the ways in which the *Aeneid* speaks to itself: echoes, correspondences and patterns within the poem shape new meaning and give Virgil an independent and distinctive voice within the epic tradition. As a result, his Ascanius is also new. Though Aeneas has sons in all his previous textual incarnations, the son he has in the *Aeneid* is Virgil’s creation, moulded in particular by the specific concerns of his epic, and a figure who allows us to reflect on those anxieties. It is for this reason that

³³ Manson 1981: 67: ‘la réalité psychologique’.

³⁴ Paschalis 1997: 61–4. The theory suggests that ‘Ascanius’ is a manifestation of the ‘public side’ of Aeneas’ son, a political character, involved and interested in military and religious activity, while ‘Iulus’ is a ‘private’ individual, innocent and helpless during the sack of Troy, later portrayed as beautiful, sensitive and emotional, and involved in erotic scenes and in the revelation of divine will to the human characters of the text. However, it is difficult always to draw such distinctions: the two names are often used close together (e.g. *Aen.* 1.267; 4.274; 5.546–8); Iulus is interested in the hunting which was a precursor to military activity (*Aen.* 7.477–8, 493–4); and Ascanius appears in a number of erotically tinged scenes (*Aen.* 1.658–9, 691–94; 4.83–5), and is several times the object of family affection even when he does not display it (*Aen.* 1.646; 3.484–91; 4.354–5). The revelation of divine will, too, can be viewed as much as a public and political event as a private one.

³⁵ Parry 1963.

³⁶ For Virgil’s detailed engagement with Homer, see Knauer 1964. More recently, Hutchinson 2013: 174–5, 333–5 and Goldschmidt 2013 have studied Virgil’s use of

I devote considerable space in this book to tracing the development of Virgil's Ascanius as a crucial part of the larger development of the notoriously carefully worked poem on which Virgil spent the last decade or more of his life.

Two names are used for Aeneas' son in the *Aeneid*. These names, Ascanius and Iulus, which appear with almost equal frequency in the text, are one small reason for what I will argue is a characteristic doubleness about Virgil's Ascanius.³⁷ Certainly, they encourage people to speak of him in ways suggestive of a double identity, as we see in claims such as this: '*parvus Iulus* has found his way into the reader's heart and prepared a cordial reception for *puer Ascanius*, who takes his place'.³⁸ Such a statement implies that Aeneas' son grows from being a 'Iulus' to being an 'Ascanius' as the epic progresses, but this is not the case. Ascanius is the name seen slightly more frequently, and the one used both first and last, but Iulus is almost as prevalent a name for Aeneas' son.³⁹ It is generally agreed that little significance can be attached to the choice of one of these names over the other in any given scene,⁴⁰ though it has also recently been pointed out that the usual placement of the name 'Iulus' at the end of the hexameter mirrors the dynastic hopes embodied in this particular name as well as the young prince's own hopes of inheriting his father's kingdom.⁴¹ Clearly, the name Iulus is politically important, and it is indeed partly for this reason that I choose to use the name Ascanius throughout this book: it is slightly more neutral. Of course, choosing not to call him Iulus is a loaded decision too, and I do not intend to downplay his role as the ancestor of the *gens Iulia*. I do, however, argue that this is not the most important role he plays in the epic, and so it

Homer, Ennius and other literary predecessors. On intertextuality in Roman poetry more generally, see Conte 1986; Hinds 1998.

³⁷ He is called Iulus thirty-five times, and Ascanius forty-one.

³⁸ Moseley 1926: 46. Compare also Mercury, who tells Aeneas to 'think of the growing Ascanius and the hopes of Iulus your heir' (*Ascanium surgentem et spes heredis Iuli / respice*, *Aen.* 4.274–5).

³⁹ Ascanius at *Aen.* 1.267, and at 12.433.

⁴⁰ R. G. Austin 1964, *ad Aen.* 2.563; Moseley 1926: 66; O'Hara 1996: 221.

⁴¹ Cowan 2009.

is in part to reflect my reading of Virgil's Iulus as a symbol of more than just the future ascendancy of Augustus that I use his other name.

For interpretative reasons, then, as well as for the sake of expediency, I have pinned Ascanius down with a single name.⁴² This, however, is as far as I am prepared to go in imposing coherence or consistency on him as a character.⁴³ As suggested above, this book will show how, above all, Virgil's Ascanius is characterised by genuine ambiguity. His very childishness makes him malleable, he is a symbol of a contested future, and he will frequently appear in episodes that suggest alternative visions – and different possible versions – of the epic narrative. There are certain characteristics that cluster around him: he is little to begin with, as we have seen, and also frequently described as handsome,⁴⁴ as well as being prone to impetuous and excessive behaviour, thought in the Roman world to be typical of the young. However, it is not with Ascanius as a character that I am primarily concerned, but with what he represents and the important issues he raises. I do not, therefore, attempt to answer the vexed question of how old Ascanius is at any given point in the text.⁴⁵ He is small enough to be held up in Creusa's arms during the last days of the siege of Troy and for his uncle Cupid, impersonating him, to nestle in Dido's lap when his father arrives in Carthage. However he also rides a horse in Carthage and joins in the hunt in Book Four, then not long afterwards participates in a virtuoso equestrian display in Sicily in Book Five, and soon after that, in Italy, he kills a man. This should not trouble us: the age of youthful characters is often difficult to ascertain in classical literature,⁴⁶ and the passage of

⁴² A hyphenated name (Iulus-Ascanius or Ascanius-Iulus) was another option, or I could have used both names, 'Ascanius Iulus', taking Jupiter at his word that Iulus is a *cognomen* (*Aen.* 1.267). Either seemed awkward: the choice of simply Ascanius was in part also a matter of style.

⁴³ On the problems of expecting characters in Roman poetry to be rounded and coherent, see Seo 2013: 1–18.

⁴⁴ *pulcher*: *Aen.* 5.570; 7.107, 477; 9.293, 310.

⁴⁵ The issue is raised by Servius, *ad Aen.* 3.491, and discussed by Heinze 1993: 269 and Moseley 1926: 49–50. Both twentieth-century scholars conclude that trying to work out Ascanius' exact age is difficult and probably not fruitful.

⁴⁶ Golden 1990: 18; Kassel 1991. Children's age is fluid and hard to distinguish on Roman monuments too: Mander 2013: 19–32.

time in the *Aeneid* is notoriously vague. While Ascanius perhaps grows up faster than is humanly possible, the real point is that he is a child in the process of maturation, one who strives towards adulthood but who remains a childish figure to the end. It is, indeed, precisely the disjointedness of his character that helps to make him symbolically important, as different episodes show us different perspectives on him and – from an incoherent and fragmented set of impressions – we come to understand his metaphorical significance in the text.⁴⁷

Some of that significance is sketched out above, where I have suggested that Ascanius helps us to think about the Trojans' future and its various possibilities, as well as about questions important not only to the *Aeneid* but also to Virgil's Rome, such as the survival of children and of peoples, the succession to powerful fathers and the ideals of heroism. I have also hinted at a reading of Ascanius that views him as a symbol of the progress of the epic itself. This may seem counter-intuitive: as noted above, epic is not the province of children. Nowhere in the *Aeneid* is that more clearly stated than in Apollo's address to Ascanius after he has made his first kill in battle, telling him to refrain from further involvement in armed conflict (*cetera parce, puer, bello*, *Aen.* 9.656). This moment not only underscores Ascanius' removal from the main activity of the narrative and suggests that he does not yet belong in an epic story,⁴⁸ but also evokes those moments in non-epic Latin poetry where Apollo intervenes to tell a poet who has begun writing epic to give it up, and turn to another genre more suited to his limitations, such as bucolic poetry or elegy.⁴⁹ There are also, as we shall see,

⁴⁷ For a similar approach to characterisation in the English novel, see Docherty 1983. On characterisation in classical literature, see De Temmerman 2014; Duff 2003; E. C. Evans 1935, 1948; Halliwell 1990; Pelling 1990; Seo 2013. On characterisation in the *Aeneid*, see Feeney 1983; Griffith 1985: 183–97; Laird 1997; Mackie 1988; Michels 1997; Seo 2013: 32–65.

⁴⁸ Hardie 1994: 199. A similar suggestion was made by the warrior whom Ascanius killed: 'leave arms to men' (*sinite arma viris*, *Aen.* 9.620), which clearly echoes the famous and programmatic *arma virumque cano* that opens the *Aeneid*. For a replay of the scene in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with similar suggestions on the inappropriateness of children playing a role in epic, see Morgan 2003: 73–5.

⁴⁹ E.g. Propertius 3.3.13–26; Virgil, *Eclogues* 6.3–5. On the metapoetics of succession in Latin epic, see Bernstein 2008: 193–204; Hardie 1993b: 98–119. On Ascanius as an elegiac figure, see Ziogas 2010.

a number of moments in the *Aeneid* where it is either suggested that Ascanius be removed from the hazards of the epic plot⁵⁰ or where he acts in ways that have seemed to some of Virgil's readers as childish and inappropriate to the seriousness of the narrative.⁵¹

A strong case can be made for Ascanius as a symbol of anti-epic, either as the representative of an alternative story to the forward-moving plot in which Aeneas moves, or as a figure disruptive to or out of place in that plot. Indeed, this is to be a significant strand in my argument in this book, which proposes that Virgil's Ascanius is a figure who can be made to represent various forms of opposition to the *Aeneid*'s epic momentum. At the same time, however, Ascanius is deeply invested in the forward thrust of the text, both as a symbol of the future and ancestor of the *gens Iulia*, and as a boy with a burning desire to grow up.⁵² We will see how Jupiter, Mercury and Aeneas each speak of Ascanius and his expectations as both the goal and motivating factor of Aeneas' epic journey, and note that the Trojans cast up on Dido's shores in Carthage associate abandoning their epic quest with the potential loss of Ascanius. The fact that a kingdom is owed to Ascanius is stressed repeatedly by the fourth-century CE writer Servius, Virgil's earliest extant commentator.⁵³ The achievement of this kingdom, moreover, which lies beyond the temporal end of the text, is intimately interconnected with the *Aeneid*'s other unachieved goals: the establishment of the Roman race, the imposition of peace in Latium and the coming of Augustus' golden age. Both in representing hopes that we never see come to fruition in the text, and as a young character striving towards a goal of adulthood that is denied him, Ascanius is a figure for the progress of the *Aeneid* itself. Virgil's epic is notoriously, and self-consciously, plagued by delays,⁵⁴ and its end is famously abrupt and inconclusive. So too, as we will see by the final chapters of this book, Virgil's Ascanius

⁵⁰ See esp. [Chapter 7](#) below, pp. 131–44.

⁵¹ Wounding Silvia's stag in Book Seven, for example, was viewed by Macrobius as a 'childish' (*puerile*) reason for the outbreak of war, and the solution to the table-eating prophecy in the same book also stresses Ascanius' innate lack of gravitas and adult understanding. See below, pp. 152–3, 172–83.

⁵² For this desire, see for example *Aen.* 4.156–9.

⁵³ For example, *ad Aen.* 3.501, 4.234, 10.47.

⁵⁴ Mitchell-Boyask 1996.

finds his own maturity repeatedly delayed in the text despite his desires to achieve that end. Ultimately, he is left standing inconclusively on the sidelines as his father moves forwards towards the extermination of Turnus. We last see him in Book Twelve in a state of suspended animation, still expected to move forward to adulthood, and expected moreover to use the *Aeneid* as a guide in doing so, but poised nonetheless on the threshold of achievement, left hanging in a similar manner to the text itself. It is as a text about beginnings and unachieved ends that the *Aeneid* can be said to be childish, and in this respect that the boy Ascanius is a representative of Virgil's contribution to a genre more commonly associated with adult men.

Ascanius has attracted little scholarly attention relative to the vast amount of literature on the *Aeneid*.⁵⁵ He is, however, as I have suggested above, a figure of great importance to Virgil's epic, not because of his achievements, which are few, but because of what he symbolises. This book investigates that symbolic significance. Each chapter focuses on a particular episode in Ascanius' career through the *Aeneid*, and though I start in Book One and finish with Book Twelve I do not follow the narrative structure of Virgil's epic throughout. The fragmented and incoherent representation of Ascanius itself offers some justification for jumping around in the text in this way, as I draw out the main themes associated with the youngest hero of the *Aeneid* and consider the ways in which his representation encourages Virgil's readers to perceive the future, and imagine both its possibilities and its problems.

⁵⁵ Ascanius' role in the *Aeneid* has been discussed by Armstrong 2005; Baker 1980; Bishop 1988: 290–301; Casali 2007, 2009; R. E. Coleman 1942–3; Cowan 2009; De Vega and De Arena 1998; Dingel 2001; Eidinow 2003; Elftmann 1979: esp. 182–3; Feldman 1952–3, 1957–8; W. W. Fowler 1919: 87–92; Golden 2013: 253–5; Gowers 2011: 106–11; Haupt 1924; Lee 1979, *passim*; Lyne 1987: 151–5, 189–206; Manson 1981; Maurach 1968; Merriam 2002; Moseley 1926: 47–67; Nappa 1997; J. K. Newman and F. S. Newman 2005; O'Hara 2007: 77–82, 88–91; Petrini 1997: 87–110; Richard 1986; Rogerson 2002, 2005, 2013; Ross 1977; Ryder 1917; Schiesaro 2008a, 2008b; Wagner 1995: 77–164; Ziogas 2010.

CHAPTER 2

THE HEIR AND THE SPARE

The myths of the earliest days of the Roman race are a notorious collection of multiple, often conflicting versions of events.¹ Aeneas and his Trojans are presented on the one hand as needy refugees from a destroyed city and on the other as survivors who profited from Priam's downfall, thanks to well-timed – or, from another point of view, treacherous – negotiation with the Greeks. Several, quite different answers are given to the question of how many generations passed between Aeneas' foundation of his new city in Italy and the foundation of Rome. Where, and how many times, Aeneas stopped along his journey from Troy to Italy is also a matter of debate. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are so many different stories clustered around Aeneas' journey to Italy and his settlement there, that Virgil's handling of these myths to produce a smooth and mostly coherent narrative has been hailed as 'the conquest of chaos'.² As a prelude to my book's investigation of Virgil's representation of Ascanius, this chapter examines the myths around the sons of Aeneas, and what Virgil did with them. It seems at first as though chaos has been conquered here too: Virgil has tidied up Aeneas' family tree, reducing multiple offspring to manageable numbers. However, in dealing with Aeneas' descendants Virgil has also allowed an inconsistency to stand in the text, giving Aeneas two sons who are both said (or at least implied) to be the founders of a line of kings ruling in Alba Longa, from which Rome's founder, Romulus, and his brother Remus will eventually rise. The first is the Trojan Ascanius, and the

¹ On how Virgil dealt with the conflicting myths about Rome's foundation, see Horsfall 1981, 1986; Jackson Knight 1966: 140–2. On Ovid's manipulation of the myths, see Kyriakidis 2002.

² Horsfall 1981.

second a half-brother, the as yet unborn son of the Italian princess Lavinia. Virgil's Ascanius, as we shall see, is thus made both the heir, a vitally important symbol of the Italian future of the traumatised Trojan people, and the 'spare', destined to take second place behind a new successor to Aeneas, who will embody the union between Trojan and Italian blood towards which the epic moves. The full revelation of this rival to Ascanius' position as his father's successor and symbol of the future is somewhat subdued, coming nearly halfway through the narrative during Aeneas' descent to the underworld in Book Six. Despite its muted nature, however, the introduction of Aeneas' second son unmistakably shakes confidence in what had, until that moment, seemed like one of the certainties of the *Aeneid*: that Ascanius was to follow in his father's footsteps, as the ruler of his people and the 'second hope of great Rome' (*magnae spes altera Romae*, *Aen.* 12.168). The clear momentum of the succession from Aeneas to Ascanius and onwards is thus disrupted in one of what will prove several moments throughout Virgil's epic where the representation or the elision of the young Ascanius raises questions about the forward motion which he symbolises in the text.

Ascanius before Virgil

In the *Aeneid*, Ascanius is Aeneas' only Trojan son. This is not the case in other versions of the Trojan myth.³ In the *Iliad*, Homer's Poseidon makes reference to several sons of Aeneas,⁴ and iconographic representations of the hero's escape from Troy predating the *Aeneid* frequently show him accompanied by two or more children.⁵ Virgil's Greek contemporary, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, mentions a number of sons present at the solution of the table-eating prophecy that affirmed the Trojans' settlement in Italy,⁶

³ On the Trojan myth and its many variants, see M. J. Anderson 1997: 62–74, on 'Aineias'; Erskine 2001: esp. 15–43.

⁴ *Iliad* 20.307–8. There are three heroes named 'Ascanius' in the *Iliad*, but none is the son of Aeneas.

⁵ LIMC I.1 Aineias: 64–9, 79, 87, 92–3. Virgil's influence can be seen in the move to one son in depictions of the escape from the first century BCE onwards, as discussed above, pp. 2–4.

⁶ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.55.3. On the mention of two or more sons in the histories of Rome's origins, see also Jordan 1869: 410.

and states that a son called Euryleon, who was renamed Ascanius during the flight from Troy, was Aeneas' successor in Italy.⁷ Early commentators on the *Aeneid*, such as Servius, refer to sons called 'Eurybates', 'Dardanus' and 'Leontodamas',⁸ and Servius claims that two of these other sons are alluded to in Virgil's depiction of Ascanius in Carthage, 'wishing for a tawny lion to come down from the mountain' (*optat ... fulvum descendere monte leonem*, *Aen.* 4.159):⁹

monte leonem: per transitum tangit historiam: nam Ascanius praeter Iulum et Iulum, quae habuit nomina, etiam Dardanus et Leontodamas dictus est, ad extinctorum fratrum solacium: ideo nunc eum dicit optare adventum leonis, paulo post 'Dardaniusque nepos Veneris'. ... nam latenter etiam illud nomen ostendit. (Servius, *ad Aen.* 4.159)

a lion from the mountain: in passing he touches on historical fact: for as well as Iulus and Ilius, which were his names, Ascanius was also called Dardanus and Leontodamas, to assuage the grief caused by the loss of his brothers: it is for that reason that Virgil says at this point that he wishes for the approach of a lion (*leonem*) and just a little later mentions 'the Dardanian offspring of Venus' (*Aen.* 4.163). ... For, though in a concealed fashion, he nonetheless puts each name on display.

There are female siblings too: Pausanias mentions a daughter of Aeneas named 'Etias';¹⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus speaks of several unnamed daughters who are married in Arcadia;¹¹ and the early Roman writers Ennius and Naevius, who do not mention Ascanius or any other son at all, cast a daughter of Aeneas, called Ilia, as the ancestress of Rome's founder Romulus.¹² Even when

⁷ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.65.1. Euryleon-Ascanius, the son of Creusa, is also mentioned as Aeneas' successor by Appian, who notes in addition that this Ascanius might have been the son of Lavinia, *Roman History* 1.1. See further Jordan 1869: 415.

⁸ Eurybates: *Scholia Veronensia ad Aen.* 2.717. Dardanus and Leontodamas: Servius, *ad Aen.* 4.159.

⁹ As O'Hara 1996 notes, this seems implausible (152). I use Thilo and Hagen 1881 (*Aen.* 1–5) and 1883 (*Aen.* 6–12) for the text of Servius.

¹⁰ Pausanias 3.22.11. Aeneas' complicated family tree is traced by H. Newman and J. O. Newman 2003, Chart 41. See also Goldhill 2003, on the implications of such genealogical study.

¹¹ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.54.2.

¹² Servius, *ad Aen.* 1.273: *Naevius et Ennius Aeneae ex filia nepotem Romulum conditorem urbis tradunt*, 'Naevius and Ennius say that Romulus, the founder of the city, was a descendant of Aeneas' daughter.' On the absence of Ascanius from Ennius' *Annales*, see Casali 2007.

Ascanius is mentioned by historians of early Rome, he is not always connected with the royal line that leads to Romulus: while Virgil's Ascanius follows his father to Italy, in alternative variants of the Trojan myth he instead founds kingdoms in other places. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for example, relates a version of the story in which Aeneas' son Ascanius first spends a period acting as the king, by invitation, of the Daskylites on the Propontis, during which time the nearby Ascanian lake is named after him, and then returns with the Trojans to Troy, to re-establish their kingdom there.¹³ Others place him as king elsewhere in the vicinity of Troy, such as Ida.¹⁴

The greatest confusion, however, surrounds firstly the ethnic identity of Ascanius and secondly his relationship with another descendent of Aeneas, called Iulus, who is sometimes said to be his son,¹⁵ and sometimes Ascanius himself by another name.¹⁶ The name Ascanius is given both to Aeneas' son by the Trojan princess Creusa and to his posthumous son with the Italian Lavinia,¹⁷ and while some writers, including Virgil, make Ascanius and Iulus refer to the same character, several others do not. Virgil's contemporary Livy acknowledges the murkiness of Ascanius' identity, as he talks about Aeneas' successor:¹⁸

haud ambigam – quis enim rem tam veterem pro certo adfirmet? – hicine fuerit Ascanius an maior quam hic, Creusa matre Ilio incolumi natus comesque inde paternae fugae, quem Iulum eundem Iulia gens auctorem nominis sui nuncupat. is Ascanius, ubicumque et quacumque matre genitus – certe natum Aenea constat. (Livy 1.3.2–3)

¹³ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.47.5; 54.2. Dionysius mentions the mythographer Hellanicus Lesbios as a source. He also dismisses an alternative story which has Ascanius, and not Aeneas, leading the Trojans to Italy (1.53.4).

¹⁴ Stephanus Byzantius s.v. Ἀσκανία; Pomponius Mela, *de Chorographia* 1.92.

¹⁵ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.70.3. In Diodorus Siculus, Ascanius has a son called Iulius (7.5.8), who was the eponymous founder of the *gens Iulia*.

¹⁶ E.g. Pseudo Aurelius Victor, *de Origine Gentis Romanae* 9.3. This text also talks about 'two little sons, according to some' (*duosque parvulos filios, ut quidam tradunt*) rescued from Troy by Aeneas. For Ascanius as Iulus see also Servius, *ad Aen.* 1.267, referring to Cato and an unknown Caesar as his sources, and Jordan 1869: 418–19.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Appian, *Roman History* 1.1; Servius, *ad Aen.* 6.760. The earliest recorded identification of Ascanius as Creusa's son is by Hellanicus, *FGRH* 4.F.31.

¹⁸ Livy had also claimed a little earlier that Ascanius was Aeneas' son by Lavinia. Ogilvie 1965, *ad loc.*, claims that the assertion that Ascanius was the son of Aeneas and Lavinia is Marian propaganda attributable to Licinius Macer. Further on Livy's Ascanius see Fox 1996: 98–100; on the identity of Ascanius' mother in the *Aeneid* and elsewhere, see Edgeworth 2001.

I won't argue the question – for who could make a declaration that could be considered certain in a matter so ancient? – whether this successor was Ascanius [i.e. Lavinia's son] or the older one, the son of Creusa, born while Troy still stood, who accompanied his father in his flight from the city, and the same one whom – as Iulus – the Julian family proclaim the founder of their name. Everyone agrees that this Ascanius, wherever and from whatever mother he was born, certainly was the son of Aeneas.

In Livy's history, this unidentifiable Ascanius is too young to rule when Aeneas dies, and Lavinia acts as regent until he comes of age, at which point he leaves the flourishing city of Lavinium to her, 'his mother or his stepmother' (*matri seu novercae*, 1.3.3), and founds Alba Longa. His son, Silvius, is the next king, so named because he was born in the woods, and the name Silvius becomes the *cognomen* of all the Alban kings thereafter (1.3.7) down to Numitor, father of Rhea Silvia, the mother of Remus and Romulus, who founded Rome.

Livy not only leaves Ascanius' identity a mystery, but stresses its mystery several times as he traces the line of Rome's first king back to the Trojan Aeneas, possibly to present himself as a trustworthy historian, unwilling to mislead his audience by imposing solutions to tidy up the vague and contradictory claims made in his sources.¹⁹ Other historians of early Rome were not so scrupulous and the tidier story most often told about the succession to Aeneas proposes Ascanius as Aeneas' son (or one of them) by his Trojan wife, Iulus as one of Ascanius' sons and Silvius as Aeneas' posthumous son by Lavinia.²⁰ In these narratives, Ascanius succeeds to his father's kingdom in Italy after Aeneas' death and in the fullness of time founds Alba Longa. When he dies, there is conflict between his son, Iulus, and his (considerably younger) half-brother Silvius, as to who should succeed him. The Latin people decide in favour of Silvius, whose descent from the king Latinus, Lavinia's father, stands in his favour. Iulus is compensated for the loss of kingship with a prestigious religious position, sometimes

¹⁹ Miles 1995: 8–74.

²⁰ An even tidier story is found in Florus 1.1: Iulus, the son of Aeneas, founds Alba Longa and is the ancestor of Romulus. Sextus Pompeius Festus claims that Aeneas was the father of Ascanius, who fathered a daughter called Rhome, after whom Rome was named (*de verborum significatione* 269).

presented as the precursor to the role of *pontifex maximus* adopted by Julius Caesar and Augustus, both of whom claimed descent from Aeneas through Iulus.²¹

As told by Virgil's contemporary, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, this story hints at the possibility of conflict, not only between Silvius and Iulus, Ascanius' son, as to who was to succeed to the rule of Alba Longa, but also between Silvius and his older half-brother, Ascanius, when he claims that the pregnant Lavinia feared persecution by Ascanius after Aeneas died and took to the woods. A similar story is told by Diodorus Siculus, who even more strongly emphasises the rivalry between Aeneas' two sons, claiming that Ascanius actually did persecute Lavinia, and thus, in the family conflict, anticipates the civil strife that was so frequently a part of the Roman story.²² This tradition persisted after Virgil's time, and may be echoed in the late first century CE, when Statius remembered Ascanius not only as the founder of Alba Longa but as the traumatised survivor of war in Italy, with a deeply jaundiced view of the woman for whom it was fought:²³

ubi post Aeneia fata
stellatus Latiis ingessit montibus Albam
Ascanius, Phrygio dum pingues sanguine campos
odit et infaustae regnum dotale novercae. (Statius, *Silvae* 5.3.37–40)

Where, after Aeneas' death, Ascanius – destined for the stars – placed Alba on the hills of Latium, hating the plains which had been so abundantly fertilised with Trojan blood and the kingdom that was his unlucky stepmother's dowry.

There is a considerable amount, then, about the mythical histories relating to Ascanius that is potentially problematic: his identity is uncertain, as is his ethnicity, and at least one strand of the tradition suggests that if he is a proto-Roman, then as an ancestor – if not in the direct line – of the future kings of Rome, he is also a proto-Romulus (or Remus), engaging in fraternal strife

²¹ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.70.1–4; Tzetzes, *ad Lycophron, Alexandra* 1232; Zonaras 7.1; Appian, *Roman History* 1.2.

²² Diodorus Siculus 7.5.6–8.

²³ The existence of ill-will and mistrust between Lavinia and Ascanius is also mentioned at *Scholia Veronensia ad Aen.* 7.485; Servius, *ad Aen.* 1.270, 6.760. I use Gibson's 2006 text for *Silvae* 5.

even before the city of Rome has been founded by his putative descendants.

Virgil's Ascanius

As this brief account of the confused tradition about Aeneas' offspring and successors demonstrates, the identification of Ascanius with Iulus did 'not enjoy universal acceptance' in Virgil's time.²⁴ When Jupiter says to Venus that 'the name Iulus is now given to the boy Ascanius' (*puer Ascanius, cui nunc cognomen Iulo / additur, Aen. 1.267–8*), Aeneas' Trojan son, and goes on to promise that Ascanius will found Alba Longa and rule there for thirty years (270–1), he offers a solution to the question of Ascanius' identity. When he then claims that Hector's race will rule in Alba Longa for three hundred years until the birth of Romulus and Remus (272–4), he glosses over the possibility mentioned in many other histories of Rome's earliest days that the later kings of Alba Longa will not be descended from the Trojan Ascanius but from his half-brother, a half-brother with whom he – or his son – may have been at odds. This particular solution allays Venus' fears about the future of Aeneas and his family by eliding the difficulties and contestation embedded in the legends about them,²⁵ while the identification of Ascanius with Iulus and the implication that this character is a distant ancestor of Rome's founder also compliments the Julian family who allege their descent from Iulus (286–8).²⁶ In addition, Virgil's implications about Ascanius' identity, future and family tree sit well with the frequent identification of Ascanius and the hopes both of his father and the Trojan people for the future. It is only later that we realise that the description of Alba 'under the dominion of Hector's race' (*gente sub Hectorea*, 273) leaves room for the introduction of Aeneas' other son Silvius as a rival – or the true – progenitor of the Alban kings.²⁷

²⁴ Paschalis 1997: 61.

²⁵ O'Hara 1990: 132–51.

²⁶ The difficulty of identifying which member of the Julian family Jupiter means when he speaks of 'Julius, whose name was handed down from great Iulus' (*Iulius, a magno demissum nomen Iulo, Aen. 1.288*) may also, like the omission of mention of Silvius, represent a politic suppression of civil strife. See O'Hara 1990: 155–63.

²⁷ Servius, *ad Eclogues* 6.3 claims that Virgil may once have started an epic on the Alban kings, but was 'put off by the difficulty of their names' (*nominum asperitate deterrius*).

Before we come to Silvius, however, it is worth noting the frequency with which Virgil's Ascanius is aligned with hopes for the future and specifically with the inheritance of a kingdom in Italy throughout the *Aeneid*. As we might expect, Aeneas' love and concern for his son Ascanius is stressed a number of times, particularly in the opening books of the epic, where Troy's fall and its fraught aftermath are described. One of Aeneas' chief concerns as he battles through the burning city is 'whether his wife Creusa and child Ascanius survive' (*superet coniunxne Creusa / Ascaniusque puer?* *Aen.* 2.597–8), for example, and the parting injunction he receives from Creusa's ghost is to 'maintain the love of the son they both hold in common' (*nati serva communis amorem*, *Aen.* 2.789). When he arrives in Africa after the storm in Book One it is said that 'all his doting fatherly care centred on Ascanius' (*omnis in Ascanio cari stat cura parentis*, 646).²⁸ Moreover, when Jupiter and Mercury use Aeneas' fatherly feeling towards Ascanius as one of the goads to make him leave Carthage in Book Four, they stress in particular – and repeatedly – that Ascanius is the heir to the kingdom that his father is destined to found in Italy. Indeed, when Jupiter instructs Mercury on what to say to Aeneas to compel him to leave Dido, Ascanius' expectations as his heir are part of the final and, it is expected, decisive argument the messenger god is to put to the Trojan hero:

'si nulla accendit tantarum gloria rerum
nec super ipse sua molitur laude laborem,
Ascanione pater Romanas invidet arces?
quid struit? aut qua spe inimica in gente moratur
nec prolem Ausoniam et Lavinia respicit arva?
naviget: haec summa est, hic nostri nuntius esto.' (*Aeneid* 4.232–7)

'If none of the glory of such great achievements fires him and he does not himself undertake the labour for the sake of his own fame, does the father begrudge Roman citadels to Ascanius? What story does he think he is part of? With what hope is he tarrying among a hostile people, not looking to his Italian offspring and Lavinia's fields? He should sail: that is the nub of it, and you are to be our messenger to him.'

On the kings of Alba as a topic for Roman epic, cf. Propertius 3.3.3, with Heyworth and Morwood 2011, *ad loc.*

²⁸ Aeneas' concern for Ascanius' safety can also be seen at *Aen.* 2.563, 666 and 747. Dido fantasises about hurting Aeneas by tearing him from his son's embrace (*Aen.* 4.616).

There is a hint of the possibility of an Italian son for Aeneas in Jupiter's reference to 'Italian offspring' (*prolem Ausoniam*, 236), heightened by the fact that it comes in the same line as a reference to Lavinia.²⁹ However, it is Ascanius who is named specifically as Aeneas' son, and his claims to – and hopes for – a Roman kingdom (*Romanas ... arces*, 234) that are foregrounded. Thus the dominant suggestion of the epic narrative which Jupiter sets out here – and which is challenged by Aeneas' attempts to construct his own story in Carthage (*struit*, 235)³⁰ – is that Ascanius' descendants will rule Rome. The implication in the incredulous 'with what hope ...?' (*qua spe*, 235) that Ascanius' hopes are the ones that the father should be cherishing is strengthened when Mercury repeats the message, this time with no clear allusion to an Italian son for Aeneas to hint at conflict:³¹

'Ascanium surgentem et spes heredis Iuli
respice, cui regnum Italiae Romanaque tellus
debetur.' (*Aeneid* 4.274–6)

'Look to your growing son Ascanius and the hope of Iulus the heir, to whom the kingdom of Italy is owed, and the Roman land.'

Although mention of both Ascanius and Iulus in a single line (274) might bring to mind their separate identities elsewhere, it also recalls the moment in Book One when Jupiter gave the name Iulus to Ascanius, and both names similarly appeared towards the beginning and at the end of a single line (267).³² Moreover, the connection between Ascanius-Iulus and Rome is clearly stated here once more, as it was in Jupiter's original speech, and as it will be echoed in the description of Ascanius as the second hope of Rome in Book Twelve (168). And when Aeneas reworks

²⁹ O'Hara 2007: 89–90, who points out that Silvius is also described as *proles* at *Aen.* 6.763.

³⁰ For *struere* of literary composition, see *OLD struo* 3a.

³¹ Mercury has already closely echoed Jupiter's *quid struit? aut qua spe* (235) with *quid struis? aut qua spe* (271), a question to be repeated by Jupiter to Juno at *Aen.* 12.796. The echo of Jupiter's *respicit* (236) in Mercury's *respice* (275) reinforces the impulse to see the hope for the heir Iulus (274) as a corrective to the questionable hope that keeps Aeneas in Carthage.

³² See above, p. 9, n. 34.

Mercury's admonition as he explains to Dido that he has to leave because of what he owes to Ascanius, the link between his young Trojan son and Italy is underlined again:

'me puer Ascanius capitisque iniuria cari,
quem regno Hesperiae fraudo et fatalibus arvis.' (*Aeneid* 4.354–5)

'My boy Ascanius [goads] me, and the wrongs I do to the dear head of
one whom I defraud of the Italian kingdom and those god-given fields.'

As Jupiter's message passes from him to Mercury, Mercury to Aeneas and then Aeneas to Dido, it is simplified: the shadowy presence of an Italian descendant is gradually stripped away until only Ascanius remains. All of this serves to reinforce the suggestion in Jupiter's initial prophecy to Venus that Ascanius is the inheritor of (and an important figure in) the Italian – and the Roman – future which Aeneas is destined to found, though in hindsight we can see that such a reading is a little misguided. Several other references to Ascanius and hope further emphasise the belief that it is Ascanius who stands for the future of Aeneas' family and his followers. The Trojan Ilioneus begins the sequence by speaking of the hope for Ascanius (and an Italian future for the Trojans) potentially terminated by the storm that drove the Trojans to Carthaginian shores (*Aen.* 1.556).³³ Later, Aeneas is twice appealed to in the name of his 'hope for his growing son Iulus' (*spes surgentis Iuli*, *Aen.* 6.364 and 10.524).

The connection of these hopes with Italy is confirmed by two more references to Ascanius' foundation of Alba Longa, first in the description of the *lusus Troiae*, which the young Trojan is said to have imported to Italy 'once he girded Alba Longa with walls' (*Longam muris cum cingeret Albam*, *Aen.* 5.597), and then again early in Book Eight, when the river god Tiberinus prophesies the future to Aeneas in a dream:³⁴

'ex quo ter denis urbem redeuntibus annis
Ascanius clari condet cognominis Albam.
haud incerta cano.' (*Aeneid* 8.47–9)

³³ The Trojans' Italian destination, if Aeneas and Ascanius live, is stressed by the repetition *Italiam ... Italiam* (553–4) and by mention of *Latium* (554).

³⁴ Further on Tiberinus' prophecy, see Gransden 1976: 188–90, with bibliography; O'Hara 1990: 31–5.

'After this, when three times ten years have passed, Ascanius will found the city Alba, of dazzling name. I make no uncertain prophecy.'

Ascanius' role as the founder of Alba Longa is thus emphatically and repeatedly stressed.³⁵ The god Tiberinus, in particular, is insistent on the certainty of his claims, and his 'I make no uncertain prophecy' (49) reiterates several similar assertions a little earlier in his speech,³⁶ first where he assures Aeneas that his new home and his gods are both, without a doubt, properly to be located on Italian shores (*hic tibi certa domus, certi (ne absiste) penates*, 39), and then when he says that a sign will be provided to prove that he 'should not be thought a deceptive dream vision, just making up empty stories' (*ne vana putes haec fingere somnum*, 42). Like Jupiter's prophecy in Book One, Tiberinus' assurances are deceptive, especially when he claims that Aeneas should not fear war in Italy since the anger of the gods had abated (40–1).³⁷ However, while his anxiously repeated claims to speak the truth draw attention to the truths he does not reveal, they also serve to solidify – even to overemphasise – the connection between Ascanius and Alba Longa, and further encourage the supposition that Ascanius' sons will rule there after him without any complicating factors.

Though knowledge of the alternate histories of pre-Roman Italy suggests that this assumption is probably erroneous, it is still further fostered by the presentation later in the book of Ascanius as the ancestor of a line of triumphant Romans, as Virgil begins his description of the shield made for Aeneas by Vulcan:

illic res Italas Romanorumque triumphos
 haud vaturn ignarus venturique inscius aevi
 fecerat ignipotens, illic genus omne futurae
 stirpis ab Ascanio pugnataque in ordine bella. (*Aeneid* 8.626–9)

There the fire god, by no means unaware of the forecasts of prophets or ignorant of the ages to come, had crafted the deeds of the Italians and the triumphs of the Romans; there the whole race of future offspring from Ascanius and the wars as they were fought in order.

³⁵ It is a surety for Virgil's contemporaries and successors too: cf. Tibullus 2.5.50; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 14.609–10; Valerius Maximus 1.8.7; Suetonius, *fr.* 178.

³⁶ It is an authorial statement too, underlining its authority as it echoes the opening of the epic, *arma virumque cano* (*Aen.* 1.1).

³⁷ O'Hara 1990: 24–35.

A very suspicious reader might see an allusion to the conflict between Ascanius' offspring and Lavinia's in the reference to wars in line 629, but the implication of 'an entire race' (*genus omne*, 628) descending from Ascanius is clear. Coming soon after reference to the deeds and triumphs of Italians and Romans alike (626), the passage presents Ascanius as an important link in the genealogical chain not only from Aeneas to Augustus but also from Aeneas to Romulus (the next item in the description of the shield, 630–8) and the Romans in general.³⁸ Certainly, this is how Aeneas appears to understand the shield, as he shoulders it without properly understanding its meaning (*rerumque ignarus*, 730) and rejoices in the glorious destiny of his descendants (*gaudet / ... famamque et fata nepotum*, 730–1).³⁹

Aeneas' reaction to the shield is an object lesson in the possibility of misunderstanding or over-interpreting the future Ascanius represents. We can see this again when we turn back to the previous representation of Ascanius as an ancestor during the parade of heroes in the underworld, where Anchises spoke of an entire lineage to come from Aeneas' son:

'huc geminas nunc flecte acies, hanc aspice gentem
Romanosque tuos. hic Caesar et omnis Iuli
progenies magnum caeli ventura sub axem.' (*Aeneid* 6.788–90)

'Now turn your twin gaze this way, and look upon this family [or race], and your Romans. Here is Caesar and all the descendants of Ascanius who are to come beneath the great axis of the heavens.'

Here too Ascanius' role as the father of a line of illustrious Romans is stressed, though it is also clear that it is the Julian family in particular who are meant. As in Jupiter's prophecy in Book One, there is some ambiguity as to which Caesar – Julius or Augustus – is intended in line 789,⁴⁰ but the more insidious ambiguity lies in the implicit overlap between the *gens Romana*, whose laborious

³⁸ That this chain is unbroken is suggested by the allegedly orderly representation of the battles of these proto-Romans on the shield (*in ordine*, 629).

³⁹ On ambiguity in, and on reading, the shield narrative, see Boyd 1995, Harrison 1997. When Vulcan implies the descent of Romulus from Aeneas, via Ascanius, he writes an imaginary history in the style of the annalists of the Roman Republic, on which see Wiseman 1979: 9–26, esp. 15–16.

⁴⁰ See Horsfall 2013, *ad loc.*

foundation is proclaimed as the subject of the *Aeneid* in Book One (33), and 'this *gens*' (*hanc ... gentem*, 788) and the 'descendants of Ascanius' (*Iuli / progenies*, 789–90) mentioned in Book Six.⁴¹ While mention of a *gens* by itself might look like a reference to a family, reference to 'your Romans' (*Romanosque tuos*, 789) opens up its possibilities,⁴² and the *Aeneid* thus maintains a sense of vague all-inclusiveness about Ascanius' role as a symbol of the future and ancestor of glorious offspring.⁴³

Virgil's Silvius

The open-endedness which characterises Ascanius' representation of the future is particularly striking at this moment in Book Six, coming soon after Aeneas has seen the shade of Silvius, his future son by Lavinia. There, Anchises' introduction of this new offspring made the inconsistencies in the *Aeneid* regarding the future kings of Alba Longa, and the family tree of Aeneas' descendants, clearly apparent:

'Nunc age, Dardanium prolem quae deinde sequatur
gloria, qui maneant Itala de gente nepotes,
inlustris animas nostrumque in nomen ituras,
expediam dictis et te tua fata docebo.
ille, vides, pura iuvenis qui nititur hasta,
proxima sorte tenet lucis loca, primus ad auras
aetherias Italo commixtus sanguine surget,
Silvius, Albanum nomen, tua postuma proles,
quem tibi longaevo serum Lavinia coniunx
educet silvis regem regumque parentem,
unde genus Longa nostrum dominabitur Alba.' (*Aeneid* 6.756–66)

'Come now, my words will spell out for you the glory hereafter to follow for your Dardanian offspring, and what descendants are in store from

⁴¹ Horsfall 2013, *ad loc.* compares the description of Aeneas as the 'rootstock of the Roman race' in Book Twelve (*Romanae stirpis origo*, 166).

⁴² That Aeneas' family is the Romans is also suggested by the promise in Book Five that he will see 'all his own race' (*genus omne tuum*, 737) when he descends to the underworld. On Virgil's Romans as a *gens*, see Gildenhard 2007: 92–8. On ideas about the ethnic character of the Romans, see Dench 2005: 222–97.

⁴³ The slightly odd use of *geminas ... acies* (788) to describe Aeneas' gaze might also allude to the two possible interpretations both of the *gens* (*Iulia* and/or *Romana*) and of Caesar (Julius or Augustus).

Italian stock, and the distinguished souls that will join our name, and I will teach you your destiny. That youth, you see, who leans on a simple spear, occupies the first place in the queue to enter the world of the living – it is his destiny – and he will be the first to rise up to the airs above with Italian blood in his veins, he is Silvius – an Alban name – and your posthumous son, a late son for your old age whom your wife Lavinia will bring up in the woods, a king and the father of kings, and the source of that race of ours that will rule Alba Longa.’

In this important opening to his roll call of Roman heroes, Anchises identifies not Aeneas’ Trojan son but his half-Trojan, half-Italian child, Silvius, as the first example of the glory in store for ‘Dardanian offspring’ (*Dardanium prolem*, 756). As he speaks of the descendants to come from Italian stock (*Itala de gente nepotes*, 757) and of mixed blood (762), it becomes clear that the lineage descended from Lavinia is being privileged and that when he described this offspring as ‘Dardanian’ he did not simply mean ‘Trojan’. Rather, it is Dardanus’ dual nature as both Trojan and Italian – the ancestor of Trojan kings who was born in Italy and who thus justifies the riddling identification of Italy as the Trojans’ ancestral homeland – that is significant. Like Dardanus, Silvius too can be identified as both Trojan and Italian, ‘a hybrid with Italian blood’ (*Italo commixtus sanguine*, 762).

Silvius’ innate Romanness, his Trojan and Italian blood, already makes him a rival to the all-Trojan Ascanius. Moreover, as the son of Aeneas’ old age (*longaevo serum*, 764),⁴⁴ and the father of the kings of Alba Longa, Silvius, it seems, will survive and flourish well beyond Virgil’s epic narrative. And Silvius’ long and Alban future clashes cruelly with Ascanius’ expectations: as we have seen, it is suggested several times throughout the *Aeneid* not only that Ascanius was to found Alba Longa but also that his descendants were to rule there. This clash is emphasised by echoes in the description of Silvius as ‘a king and the father of kings’ (*regem regumque parentem*, 765) of a later description of Ascanius in Book Nine as ‘engendered by the gods and one who will engender gods’

⁴⁴ As noted by O’Hara 2007: 88, n. 28, there is an inconsistency here as well – also reflecting variant versions of the myth in antiquity – in the implication that Aeneas is both dead (*tua postuma proles*, 763) and old (*longaevo*, 764) when Silvius is born.

(*dis genite et geniture deos*, 642), as well as by the identical metrical position of *Longa ... Alba* in line 766 to Jupiter's *Longam ... Albam* in Book One (271).⁴⁵ In addition, the connection that Anchises makes between Silvius' 'Alban name' (*Albanum nomen*, 763) and 'our name' (*nostrumque ... nomen*, 758), that is the name of Aeneas' royal Trojan family, wars with the stress on the Julian name in Jupiter's prophecy in Book One (288),⁴⁶ while the image of Silvius' soul rising up 'to the airs above' (*ad auras / aetherias*, 761–2) suggests a close resemblance to Aeneas, who had been described in the same language in a simile in Book Four (445–6).⁴⁷ There is thus a strong suggestion that Silvius is a rival to Ascanius, not just as the ancestor of the Alban kings and the Roman kings who would follow them, but also as his father's heir and successor.

Shortly afterwards this suggestion is even more overt, as Anchises introduces one of the later Alban kings, who bears the names both of Aeneas and his Italian son Silvius:

'... et qui te nomine reddet
Silvius Aeneas, pariter pietate vel armis
egregius, si unquam regnandam acceperit Albam.' (*Aeneid* 6.768–70)

'And the one who brings you back in name, Silvius Aeneas, equally outstanding in *pietas* or at arms, if ever he takes on the rule of Alba.'

In Silvius Aeneas, Aeneas will live again. For, as Anchises makes clear, this young hero is not only to carry Aeneas' name but is potentially to be equal to him whether the comparison is in *pietas* or in his prowess as a warrior (*pariter pietate vel armis / egregius*, 769–70), closely echoing an earlier description of Aeneas in Book Six as 'notable for *pietas* and as a warrior' (*pietate insignis et armis*, 403).⁴⁸ Silvius Aeneas, it seems, might even do better at living up to Aeneas' heroic standards than Ascanius, whose status

⁴⁵ O'Hara 1990: 146–7.

⁴⁶ On the importance of names in the prophecy in Book One, see below, pp. 38–48.

⁴⁷ Compare also the Sibyl's statement that only those like Aeneas, born from the gods, whose *virtus* lifts them up 'to the heavens' (*ad aethera*, *Aen.* 6.130), can go down to the underworld and return.

⁴⁸ Conington 1883 and Fletcher 1941, *ad Aen.* 6.769 agree that the use of *vel* instead of *et* (as in 403) does not qualify the praise of Silvius Aeneas (suggesting that he will be distinguished in *pietas* or as a warrior but not both), but enhances it (whichever criterion you use for comparison, he will match up to Aeneas).

as a child is insisted on throughout the epic and whose attempts to act as an adult or stand in for his father are repeatedly frustrated, as we will later see.⁴⁹

Indeed, the possibility of an Italian replacement for Ascanius is raised not only by the brief descriptions of the unborn Silvius and Silvius Aeneas but also by the depiction of Lavinia, whose marriage to Aeneas will create this new lineage. Though Lavinia herself famously does nothing but blush in the *Aeneid*, she too – as the potential mother of a new royal dynasty – is, like Ascanius, a symbol of the future for her people. And she symbolises the future in ways strikingly similar to the Trojan prince. In Book Seven, for example, we find a rewriting of the flaming portent that was seen as a promise of glorious future for Ascanius and his family in Book Two. Just as harmless fires surrounded Ascanius' head as Troy burned, similar fires encircle Lavinia's head and do not hurt her as she stands before the altars with her father (*Aen.* 7.73–80).⁵⁰ Though there is a significantly darker edge to the portent this time, the repetition nonetheless casts Lavinia as the Ascanius figure for the second, Italian half of the *Aeneid*.⁵¹ Moreover, there are soon further hints of this substitution in the advice of the oracle of Faunus that the Trojan strangers who are about to arrive will bring glory to Latinus' family:

‘externi venient generi, qui sanguine nostrum
nomen in astra ferant, quorumque a stirpe nepotes
omnia sub pedibus, qua sol utrumque recurrens
aspicit Oceanum, vertique regique videbunt.’ (*Aeneid* 7.98–101)

‘Foreign sons-in-law will come, who will carry our name to the stars with their blood, and descendants from their stock will see the whole world beneath their feet, grovelling and under their rule, everywhere the sun looks down from furthest east to furthest west as it runs along its course.’

⁴⁹ See below, pp. 87–100, 145–6.

⁵⁰ On the portent in Book Two, see below, pp. 101–22. Further on the omens of foundation in Book Seven, see Ehlers 1949. On children in Roman religious ritual, see Mantle 2002.

⁵¹ Note also that Lavinia is Latinus' only offspring (*Aen.* 7.50–2), as – within the narrative time of the *Aeneid* – Ascanius is Aeneas' only child. That Italy might offer a replacement for the Trojan Ascanius is also suggested by the appearance of young Italians engaged in equestrian exercises outside Latinus' city when the Trojan embassy arrives in Book Seven (162–5), strongly reminiscent of the *lusus Troiae* in which Ascanius engaged in Book Five, on which see further below, pp. 79–86.

The oracle's promise of the world-wide power to be brought by the infusion of foreign blood into Latinus' family echoes the promises made by Jupiter to Venus in Book One, where he famously declared that he would set no limits on the authority of Aeneas' descendants:⁵²

'his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono:
imperium sine fine dedi.' (*Aeneid* 1.278–9)

'On them I impose no physical limits, nor limits of time: I have given them empire without end.'

Moreover, the declaration that the stranger's bloodline would carry the Latin name to the stars (*qui sanguine nostrum / nomen in astra ferant*, 98–9), which is echoed in Latinus' speech of welcome to Ilioneus (*qui sanguine nostrum / nomen in astra ferant*, 271–2), specifically recalls both the fate that Jupiter promised to Ascanius' descendant, Caesar, in Book One, 'who will limit his empire with the Ocean, his glory with the stars' (*imperium Oceano, famam qui terminet astris*, 287),⁵³ and Aeneas' destiny to join the gods among the stars, promised in Book One (259–60) and reiterated in Book Twelve (794–5). It also echoes the encouragement given to Ascanius in Book Nine, when he is told 'that's the way to the stars' (*sic itur ad astra*, 641) after killing Numanus Remulus.⁵⁴ Here, however, for Latinus' descendants, the starry destiny seems to be a surety, rather than an aspiration, and again Virgil introduces rivals to Ascanius who look as though they might be better replicas (and thus truer sons) of Aeneas than he.⁵⁵

Dealing with Inconsistency

The discrepancies in Virgil's accounts of the lineage of the Alban kings have been attributed to 'ordinary human error',⁵⁶ and the

⁵² The oracle's promise is also remembered by Latinus, when pondering Ilioneus' words: 'this man [Aeneas] would have offspring outstanding in *virtus* and descendants who would take over the whole world with their strength' (*huic progeniem virtute futuram / egregiam et totum quae viribus occupet orbem*, 257–8).

⁵³ References to the Ocean at the world's furthest edges in both passages (*Aen.* 7.101 and *Aen.* 1.287) further stress the correspondence.

⁵⁴ See further on this episode below, pp. 160–7.

⁵⁵ For the ideal son as a replica of the father, see Baroin 2010: 37–48.

⁵⁶ W. S. Anderson 1969: 17.

Aeneid itself provides an example of how easy it is to be mistaken about stories of ancestry shrouded in myth when Anchises first thinks in Book Three that Crete is the ‘ancient mother’ (96) to which the oracle directs the wandering Trojans to return, only later to ‘realise that ancestry is complicated and everyone has two parents’ (*agnovit prolem ambiguum geminosque parentis*, 180). However, it is hard to think that this inconsistency is simply a careless slip. The sustained suggestion that Ascanius will father a race of kings to rule in Alba Longa that eventually gives rise to Romulus is clearly countered by the introduction of Silvius, about whom similar claims are made in Book Six, and the tension this creates is enhanced by hints at Italian offspring for Aeneas and the implication that Lavinia can be seen as a substitute for Ascanius as a symbol and guarantor of the future. It has been said that Virgil faces ‘the thorny antiquarian question of Lavinia’s descendants ... with elegant inconsistency’.⁵⁷ There is more at work here, however, than a delicate dance around a troubled tradition. Nor should we think that Virgil merely flatters the ancestor of the *gens Iulia* with his stress on Ascanius’ role in the Trojans’ early years in Latium. And a third option, that the conflicting stories told about Ascanius and Silvius are a neutral, if playful, allusion, in the style of an Alexandrian poet, to the variations in the tradition, has rightly been dismissed: Aeneas’ descendants matter more than that.⁵⁸

What then, is the point of the *Aeneid*’s emphasis on the uncertainties of Ascanius’ succession to an Italian kingdom? Recently it has been argued that inconsistency is a key component of Roman epic, an argument that builds on a reading of these particular inconsistencies as an illustration of the deceptive nature of prophets. Thus Jupiter stresses Ascanius’ role in the family tree of the *gens Romana* and the *gens Iulia* because he is speaking to Venus, Ascanius’ grandmother, while Tiberinus focuses on Ascanius and Alba Longa to lend reassuring certainty to the predictions he gives to a troubled Aeneas in Book Eight, and to hide from him the wars to come.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Horsfall 2000, *ad Aen.* 7.76.

⁵⁸ Casali 2009: 318–25; O’Hara 2007: 88.

⁵⁹ Summarised at O’Hara 2007: 89, drawing on O’Hara 1990.

More radically, we could argue that Anchises deceives Aeneas in Book Six, talking of an Italian child who might never exist in order to spur him on to found a new city in Latium, and that the oracle of Faunus deceives Latinus in a similar way, laying the foundations for the Roman race by suggesting that glory will come for Latinus' family from a dynastic alliance with the Trojans, though in reality Aeneas already has a son to ensure his future and only needs a land to rule and pass on to him.⁶⁰ It is noteworthy that Latinus is not promised that his descendants will rule the world: nowhere does the oracle actually claim that the marriage will procure glorious heirs by lineal descent. So it is not impossible to think that the true meaning of the oracle (missed by Latinus) is that marrying his daughter to Aeneas is simply a way of making sure that the aged Latin king, who would otherwise be forgotten, is remembered by posterity.

To elide Silvius in this way is, of course, unjustifiable, given his presence in the historical tradition, even if we could dismiss the detailed and relatively lengthy account Anchises gives of the Alban kings in Book Six as verisimilitude given to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative. It is, however, undoubtedly true that the oracle in Book Seven is as suggestively unspecific, and as prone to being interpreted over-enthusiastically,⁶¹ as the prophecies made about Ascanius. This, indeed, is a centrally important factor of the inconsistencies about Ascanius and Silvius in the *Aeneid*: we can't be sure of either of their futures. Placed side by side the passages hint at civil strife to come after Aeneas' settlement in Latium, a further allusion among many in the text to the perpetual struggles for power, inheritance and succession that tore at the fabric of Roman society, from the time before the actual foundation of the city to the age of Augustus.⁶² Just as importantly, they demonstrate how multivalent and slippery prophecies can be, and at the same time offer another example of the well-known plurality of voices for which the *Aeneid* is famous.⁶³ And in doing

⁶⁰ Bleisch 1996: 457–9; O'Hara 2007: 89.

⁶¹ Bleisch 1996 notes that Latinus in fact interprets this oracle against the grain of popular beliefs about marrying outside one's social sphere.

⁶² On civil war as a struggle between brothers in the Roman imagination, see Bannon 1997: 136–73.

⁶³ O'Hara 2007: 90–1.

both these things, they suggest the contingency, in particular, of the hopes invested in the young.

We have already seen how hopes for the future are associated with Ascanius throughout the *Aeneid*, both when various figures in the text attempt to manipulate Aeneas by reference to the son he holds most dear and when the young prince appears as a symbol of the Roman future awaiting the Trojan race. The connection between hope and the young is also made in reference to other young characters in Virgil's epic: Priam's multiple offspring in Book Two (503); Marcellus in Book Six (876); Pallas in Book Eight (514) and Turnus in Book Twelve (57). All these hopes are blighted by the deaths of the young men involved,⁶⁴ as can most poignantly be seen in Anchises' tearful eulogy of Marcellus, whose shining spirit waits dejectedly in the queue of future heroes in the underworld, doomed to return to the shades too soon:

'nec puer Iliaca quisquam de gente Latinos
in tantum spe tollet avos, nec Romula quondam
ullo se tantum tellus iactabit alumno.
heu pietas, heu prisca fides invictaque bello
dextera!' (*Aeneid* 6.875–9)

'Nor will any child born of Trojan stock lift Latin grandfathers up to such a pinnacle of hope, nor will Romulus' land one day pride itself so much because of any other nursling. Alas for *pietas*, alas his unbesmirched honour, and his right hand unconquered in war!'

In this acknowledgment of how hopes for one's descendants can be dashed, there is a clear evocation of the rival claims of Silvius and Ascanius. Two parallels are produced to convey how much hope was invested in Marcellus. First we have reference to a putative child of Trojan parentage (*Iliaca ... de gente*, 875) born to Latinus-like grandfathers (*Latinos / ... avos*, 875–6), who evokes the unborn Silvius, in (possibly misguided) hopes of whom Latinus was prepared to marry Lavinia to a stranger despite vehement opposition. Then we are made to think of Romulus (876–7),⁶⁵ the descendant of Aeneas destined to found Rome, one of the most politically

⁶⁴ Petrini 1997: 21–86.

⁶⁵ Both the adjective *Romula* (876) and the reference to the child as a 'nursling' (*alumno*, 877) point clearly to Romulus.

significant children in the epic and an important link in the generational chain that runs from Aeneas to Augustus, via Ascanius or Silvius, depending on which authority is preferred. Like Romulus and Ascanius and Ascanius' half-brother, Marcellus is established here as a child who could found a dynasty and display the most admirable qualities of a Roman hero, but it is also clear that possibility and certainty are far apart.

Several counterfactuals in the description of Marcellus emphasise the message that hopes invested in the future may not be realised. When Anchises says that the gods would have thought the Roman race too powerful 'if the gift that was Marcellus had been a lasting one' (*propria haec si dona fuissent*, 871),⁶⁶ he underlines the impermanence of Marcellus' young life. A second conditional looks yearningly to a future that is impossible, since Marcellus was already dead when the passage was written:

'heu, miserande puer, si qua fata aspera rumpas!
tu Marcellus eris.' (*Aeneid* 6.882–3)

'Alas, pitiable boy, if you should break free of that harsh destiny! You will be Marcellus.'

We can also see similar stress on the uncertainties of the future elsewhere in the parade of heroes that Anchises displays to Aeneas. He predicts that Pompey and Caesar, two more representatives of the close interconnection between civil war and familial strife, will fight great wars with each other 'if they make it up to the world of the living' (*si lumina vitae / attigerint*, 828–9), and famously begs them not to do it (832–5).⁶⁷ And when he says that Silvius Aeneas will equal his heroic namesake, his prediction is qualified by the slightly hesitant 'if he ever comes to rule Alba' (*si unquam regnandam acceperit Albam*, 770). This may refer, as Servius suggests, to a story found nowhere else that Silvius Aeneas was kept out of his kingdom for fifty-three years by a regent turned usurper,⁶⁸ another sign of power struggles that will

⁶⁶ Being compared to a gift also aligns Marcellus with Ascanius, see below, p. 136.

⁶⁷ The fact that Caesar and Pompey are cast as children (*pueri*, 832) here may also emphasise childish potential and its uncertainties, even in the face of historical fact.

⁶⁸ Servius, *ad Aen.* 6.770.

disrupt the smooth succession of one descendant of Aeneas after another. However, it also alludes to ‘the general contingency to which all these potential personages are subject’,⁶⁹ underlining again the message that the future is not a certainty, even if – from the point of view of Virgil’s readers – it has already happened.

The contingency of the Alban kings is a theme that persists to the end of the *Aeneid*, when Juno grudgingly acquiesces to their existence (*sint Albani per saecula reges*, *Aen.* 12.826). She, of course, is not interested in providing a genealogy, so the question of whether it was the Trojan Ascanius or his half-brother Silvius who fathered this potential race of kings is left unanswered. What is made clear, however, is that even Ascanius, whose role as the ancestor of the *gens Iulia* not only makes him an important figure politically but makes his survival of the dangers of the epic essential, is not immune to chance. His life is not fixed on a trajectory to glory by Jupiter’s prophecy in Book One, and there are some significant threats to his quest to follow in his father’s footsteps. Virgil has not given us a tidy story about the sons of Aeneas, where generation neatly follows generation in a march to Rome. Instead, he has created an Ascanius who symbolises not only the glories of the future but also its essential uncertainties and who makes clear the tendency we all have to see what we want to see in such symbols of the future.

⁶⁹ Conington 1883, *ad loc.*

CHAPTER 3

OLD NAMES AND NEW

One of the clearest indications that Virgil's Ascanius symbolises the future is given by his names, and particularly the name 'Iulus' that is imposed by Jupiter in Book One, a hook for Virgil's contemporary readers and the focus of this chapter. That names matter in the *Aeneid* almost goes without saying. Virgil's Roman audience belonged to a reading culture accustomed to interpreting the names both of figures from myth and of their fellow citizens as meaningful indications of innate nature and destiny, and his explanations of names and name-related wordplay have been the subject of in-depth modern study.¹ Glosses and comment on proper names highlight key aspects of Virgil's characters, both mortal and divine, and – importantly for Ascanius as we will see – the etymologising of these names often links those characters to families or individuals in Virgil's own time.² Indeed, a vital function of names in the *Aeneid* is to underline inheritance and continuity. The Trojans Mnestheus, Sergestus and Cloanthus, for example, are notable in the ship race in Book Five for passing on their names to the Italian *gentes* they were later to found.³ In the same book, younger Trojans, companions of Ascanius, also bear meaningful names, some looking back to Troy and others forward to Rome.⁴ Belief in the continuity provided by the survival of a name is also apparent in Juno's final demand that the Latin people keep

¹ O'Hara 1996, with 1–56 on etymological wordplay before Virgil. See also Oliensis 1996. The meaning embodied in names was the topic of Plato's *Cratylus*, on which see Sedley 2003. On the descriptive power Romans ascribed to *cognomina* in particular, see Corbeill 1996: 57–98; Dickey 2002: 41–70, esp. 47. On names as indicators of character in modern fiction, see Docherty 1983: 43–86; and in classical literature, Peradotto 1990: 94–9.

² O'Hara 1996: 102–11, 159–60.

³ *Aen.* 5.117 (Mnestheus), 121–3 (Sergestus and Cloanthus).

⁴ *Aen.* 5.564 (Priamus), 568 (Atys, ancestor of the Atii). Further on these nominal connections between Romans of Virgil's time and Trojan families, see O'Hara 1996: 160–1; Toohey 1984; Wiseman 1974.

their own name and – by implication – their identity, while Troy’s fall is matched and made final by the disappearance of the name ‘Trojan’:

‘ne vetus indigenas nomen mutare Latinos
neu Troas fieri iubeas Teucrosque vocari

...

occidit, occideritque sinas cum nomine Troia.’ (*Aeneid* 12.823–4, 828)

‘Don’t order the native Latins to alter their old name, don’t make them become Trojans and be called ‘Trojans’. ... Troy has fallen: let it have fallen along with its name.’

Jupiter’s response acknowledges her request: *utque est nomen erit* (*Aen.* 12.835) ‘their name [i.e. the name of the Latin people] will be as it is.’ This does not, however, mean that the Trojan name, or Trojan names, will vanish from Italy. Memory of Troy, and mention of Troy, will persist into Virgil’s present, not least in the text of the *Aeneid* itself, ensuring that the name of Troy is heard long after Troy’s fall.⁵ Moreover, in the *Aeneid* several of Juno’s Italians already bear Trojan names, names like Rhoeteus and Ilus that are reminiscent of Troy’s landscape, while some of the Trojans have Italian-sounding names in their turn.⁶ Personal names in the *Aeneid* thus establish connections not only between past, present and future, but also between Trojan and Italian, the two categories which Juno was so keen to distinguish.⁷

Ilus to Iulus

Nowhere is this vital feature of the use of names in the *Aeneid* more clearly apparent than in the first reference to Aeneas’ son, Ascanius, in Jupiter’s prophecy of Rome’s future greatness in Book One, a scene with clear links to the conversation between Jupiter and Juno about names and identity in Book Twelve.⁸ It is here that his importance to the journey traced in the epic is firmly

⁵ On the importance of memory in the *Aeneid*, see Seider 2013.

⁶ Reed 2007: 5–6.

⁷ On presenting ‘Trojan’ and ‘Italian’ as opposed categories, see pp. 165–6 below on the encounter between Ascanius and Numanus Remulus.

⁸ O’Hara 1990: 142 and n. 34.

established, and here at the same time that the tensions that characterise his representation in Virgil's narrative begin to become apparent. While Ascanius appears as a symbol of certain succession and coming glory, he is also a character whose very names remind us of the problems associated with the achievement that the *Aeneid* promises. As a Trojan prince who is also the eponymous ancestor of a Roman *gens*, Ascanius is an emblem of an illustrious past and a symbol of a dazzling future. However, as a representative of the connection between past and future, he also embodies one of the *Aeneid*'s major concerns: how the Trojans are to leave enough of their Trojanness behind to become Roman. In addition, and on a more personal level, his character faces succession issues of his own, as we start to see when Jupiter makes some significant changes to the traditional story of his maturation and his nomenclature. Ascanius' introduction as a boy with more than one name marks him as a figure who represents both the difficulties and the hope of Roman progress.

Superficially, the passage where we first meet Ascanius appears benign, a comforting part of the optimistic prophecy that Jupiter offers his fearful daughter Venus.⁹ After reassuring the goddess that Aeneas will rule in Latium and ensure the Romans' glorious future, the god echoes Poseidon's forecast in the *Iliad* of a dazzling royal future for Troy's beleaguered hero and his descendants,¹⁰ promising that Aeneas' son will succeed him:

'at puer Ascanius, cui nunc cognomen Iulo
additur (Ilus erat, dum res stetit Ilia regno),
triginta magnos volvendis mensibus orbis
imperio explebit, regnumque ab sede Lavini
transferet et Longam multa vi muniet Albam.' (*Aeneid* 1.267–71)

'But the boy Ascanius, to whom now – as "Iulus" – a cognomen is added (it used to be Ilus, while the Trojan state was settled in its kingdom), will complete thirty great cycles in power as the months roll on, and will move his kingdom across from its seat at Lavinium, and fortify Alba Longa with great strength.'

⁹ O'Hara 1990: 132–63.

¹⁰ *Iliad* 20.307–8.

The passage emphasises Ascanius' place in an orderly and unbroken succession. Jupiter's promise that the young prince will rule the city his father is to found for thirty years before himself founding a new city follows soon after the prophecy that Aeneas would rule Lavinium for three years (265–66),¹¹ and directly before the assertion that Alba Longa would then be ruled for three hundred years by descendants of the Trojans, until the birth of Romulus and Remus to Rhea Silvia:

'hic iam ter centum totos regnabitur annos
gente sub Hectorea, donec regina sacerdos
Marte gravis geminam partu dabit Ilia prolem.' (*Aeneid* 1.272–4)

'Here there will thereafter be a full three hundred years of rule under the sway of Hector's bloodline, until a queenly priestess, Ilia ["the Trojan girl"], pregnant by Mars, gives birth to twin progeny.'

These princes will be descended from Aeneas' marriage to Lavinia, not from his Trojan son Ascanius, but Jupiter carefully neglects to point this out, stressing instead the Trojan side of their genealogy by naming their mother 'Ilia' (274).¹²

The name 'Ilia' only appears elsewhere in versions of Rome's prehistory that cast Romulus and Remus as Aeneas' grandchildren and thus edge Ascanius out of the line of succession.¹³ Its use here puts further positive spin on the god's predictions by overwriting these other versions and casting Ilia as Ascanius' descendant rather than his half-sister, perhaps shaping a version of the story that speaks pre-emptively to the concern for Ascanius that Venus is to demonstrate in Book Ten. The choice of name, therefore, is not neutral, and reminds us how important names can be for delineating succession and establishing the right to rule. Moreover, the

¹¹ The three-year term of Aeneas' reign is underlined by repetition: *tertia* ... *aestas* / *ternaque* ... *hiberna* ('a third summer ... and three winters').

¹² Referring to Aeneas' descendants as the 'family of Hector' (273) also stresses their Trojanness, eliding the intermingling of Italian blood that will be essential to make them Romans. Servius suggests that Virgil speaks of the *gens Hectorea* rather than the *gens Aeneia* because of the connections between Ascanius and Hector, or perhaps because Hector represents bravery and strength (*ad Aen.* 1.273).

¹³ The mother of Romulus and Remus is named Ilia by: Ennius, *Annales* 1.56, 1.60 (Skutsch); Horace, *Odes* 4.8.22; Tibullus 2.5.52; Statius, *Silvae* 1.2.243; Silius Italicus, *Punica* 12.543. In these versions of the story, where her parentage is mentioned, she is Aeneas' daughter.

name given to the mother of Rome's founders creates a link back not only, and obviously, to Troy but also, in Virgil's version of events, specifically to Ascanius, who – as Jupiter claimed only a few lines previously – was called 'Ilus' while Troy still stood. It is worth interrogating this earlier passage more closely.

Three names are used of Aeneas' son: he is the boy 'Ascanius'; he used to be the Trojan-sounding 'Ilus'; and now he has a Roman-sounding cognomen 'Iulus'.¹⁴ In these two short lines, Jupiter asserts the identity of Ascanius and Iulus, who – as we have seen in [Chapter One](#) – were not necessarily identical figures in the historical tradition. This passage appears to have transformed that tradition and in Ovid's discussion of the line of succession after Aeneas' elevation to divinity he uses the rare adjective *binominis* ('double-named') to describe Ascanius:¹⁵

inde sub Ascanii dicione binominis Alba
resque Latina fuit. (*Metamorphoses* 14.609–10)

And then under the sway of two-named Ascanius there was Alba and Latin dominion.

Ovid accepts Jupiter's authority in the Virgilian naming scene, making no mention of the third name, 'Ilus', which the god relegated to the past in *Aeneid* Book One, and showing no sign of hesitation that Ascanius has a second name. Rather, he suggests that the two names, Ascanius and Iulus, used of Aeneas' son throughout the *Aeneid* are a – if not the – defining feature of Virgil's character.¹⁶

When, like Ovid, we accept Jupiter's authoritative renaming of Aeneas' son, what exactly are we assenting to? One answer to this question is suggested by Jupiter himself, who tells a story of the movement from the past (*Ilus erat*, 268), to the present

¹⁴ 'An explicit etymological aetiology, with further implicit connotations': O'Hara 1996: 121.

¹⁵ Before Ovid, the adjective only appears in a fragment of Plautus preserved in Paulus' epitome of Festus. Ovid uses it on two other occasions (*ex Ponto* 1.8.11; *Ibis* 417) and then it appears once in Statius (*Silvae* 5.1.89) and once in Silius (*Punica* 1.326), both echoing the Ovidian phrase from the *ex Ponto*. Further on the passage from the *Metamorphoses* see Myers 2009, *ad loc.*, whose text I use here.

¹⁶ Both names are also used by Ovid. 'Ascanius': *Heroides* 7.77, 161; *Metamorphoses* 13.627, 14.609. 'Iulus': *Amores* 3.9.14; *Heroides* 7.75, 83, 137, 153; *Metamorphoses* 14.583, 15.447, 767; *Fasti* 4.39.

(*cui nunc ... Iulo*, 267), to the future (*explebit ... / transferet ... muniet*, 270–1) and who thus suggests that the names he assigns to Aeneas' son – particularly the discarded 'Ilus' and new 'Iulus' – have something to do with that unfolding history. Like the name 'Ascanius', which was attached not only to Aeneas' son but also to a river in Mysia,¹⁷ and like the prince's ostentatiously Trojan dress in the Aeneas group of the *forum Augustum*, the old name, 'Ilus', clearly evokes the Ilian kingdom of Troy.¹⁸ The name further stresses Ascanius' royal Trojan ancestry by recalling the genealogy traced by his father Aeneas in the *Iliad*, where he asserted the descent of his family from Dardanus, the son of Zeus, through Dardanus' grandson Tros, the first king of Troy, Tros' son Ilus, and Ilus' grandson Priam and great-nephew Anchises, Aeneas' father.¹⁹ At the same time the new name, 'Iulus', looks forward to the famous Roman family, the aristocratic *gens Iulia*, who claimed descent from Aeneas' son, their eponym 'Iulus'.²⁰

In this way, Jupiter's prophecy makes it clear at the beginning of Virgil's narrative that Ascanius is to be a link between the Trojan past and early Roman history of his fugitive people. More than this, Ascanius is a symbol of the movement away from Troy and towards Rome that is the central concern of the *Aeneid* itself. Jupiter's prediction about how Ascanius will transfer his royal seat from Lavinium and found a new capitol in Alba Longa contains discernible echoes

¹⁷ As Servius remarks: *sciendum est autem hunc primo Ascanium dictum a Phrygiae flumine Ascanio, ut est 'transque sonantem Ascanium'* ('and it should be understood that he was first called Ascanius after the Trojan river Ascanius, as in "and across the resounding Ascanius": *ad Aen.* 1.267), quoting Virgil's *Georgics* 3.269–70. The river was famous as the one into which Hylas was abducted during the voyage of the Argo: Propertius 1.20; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 14; Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 26. It and the nearby lake are mentioned in Ptolemy's *Geography* 5.1. Strabo speaks of two rivers, one in Mysia and one in Phrygia (*Geography* 12.4.5). Further on the Ascanius in the *Georgics* see Wijsman 1992, 1993. The easternness of the name Ascanius is also noted by Haupt 1924.

¹⁸ Servius comments further *ad loc.*: *deinde Ilum dictum a rege Ilo, unde et Ilium, postea Iulum occiso Mezentio* ('and then he was called Ilus after the king Ilus, from whom Ilium also got its name, and afterwards he was called Iulus once Mezentius had been killed').

¹⁹ *Iliad* 20.231–40, cf. also 10.415, 11.166–8. This ancestry is traced again during Aeneas' descent to the underworld (*Aen.* 6.648–50).

²⁰ The second-century CE historian Appian follows Virgil in thus explaining the Julian name as a derivation of Ilus: ἐκ γὰρ Αἰνείου καὶ Ἰλου τοῦ Αἰνείου τὸ τῶν Ἰουλιῶν γένος παρενεχθέντος τοῦ ὀνόματος ἤγειτο εἶναι ('for the *gens Iulia* believe their name to be derived from Aeneas and from Aeneas' son Ilus': *Bella Civilia* 2.10.68).

of the *Aeneid*'s proem, which promises the story of Aeneas' arrival on Lavinian shores, of foundation, of transferral of Trojan gods to Italy, and finally of Alban kings.²¹ Other Trojans were also to give their names to Roman *gentes*, and several are mentioned later in the *Aeneid*, in Book Five, as noted above. Ascanius, however, is unique among them in signifying the fortunes not only of a family but also of an entire people: as 'Iulus' he represents the destiny towards which the text strives. Indeed, Jupiter's stress on the timing of Ascanius' new name Iulus also underlines the link between the boy and the pivotal moment in the fates of both his people and the Italians that he represents. It is significant that it is 'now' (*nunc*, 267), at the very moment that Jupiter speaks to unfold the prophecy that will fix both Aeneas' fate and the fate of Rome, famously promising them 'empire without end' (*imperium sine fine*, 279), that the god claims Ascanius is given the *cognomen* 'Iulus' to replace the old 'Ilus'.²² It is precisely at moments of change, discovery and foundation that meaningful new names are applied to people, to places and to objects,²³ and the etymological focus of Jupiter's discussion of Ascanius' new name thus underscores the young prince's close symbolic connection with his people's establishment of a new kingdom in Italy, which becomes a recurrent motif throughout Virgil's epic history of the Trojans' journey towards Rome.²⁴

A journey towards a destination is also a journey away from an origin, and so at the same time, like the names of the doomed cities founded in Book Three, called after Troy, and revealed to be deficient,²⁵ the old, Trojan name 'Ilus' is implicitly presented

²¹ In particular: *Lavini* 1.270 – *Lavinia* 1.2; *transferet* 1.271 – *inferret* 1.6; *vi* 1.271 – *vi* 1.4; *Albam* 1.271 – *Albani* 1.7.

²² The attraction of the name Iulus into the dative (*Iulo*, 267) may also emphasise the present nature of Ascanius' name change, implying that Ascanius, the antecedent of the relative pronoun *cui*, is now already 'Iulus'.

²³ On this kind of *metonomasia* in Virgil and his Alexandrian predecessors, see O'Hara 1996: 88–91. O'Hara notes that Jupiter's explanation of Ascanius' name change contains many of the common features of such significant glosses, including the word *nunc*, as well as markers like *cognomen* and *dicere* (120–1).

²⁴ Cf. 4.234, 272–6, 354–5; 6.364, 789–90; 8.628–9; 9.642 (*dis genite et geniture deos*); 10.524; 12.168. On the connection between Ascanius and *spes*, see Bishop 1988: 291, and above, pp. 23–5.

²⁵ *Aen.* 3.133 (Pergamea), 334–5 (the Chaonian plains at Buthrotum), 350–1 (Pergama, the river Xanthus and Scaean gates, all at Buthrotum). On the problems of cities in the *Aeneid*, see Reed 2007: 129–47.

as a marker of a past that must be left behind as Ascanius' people move forward towards Italy. Jupiter, of course, given Venus' devotion to Troy, cannot stress the abandonment of the Trojan name too much in Book One, but the thrust of his renaming of Ascanius is nonetheless clear. The Trojan name is a thing of the past, and is not again used of Ascanius.²⁶ So, to all intents and purposes, the name 'Ilus' dies along with Troy itself, as Juno is later to demand when she asks that 'Troy stay dead along with its name' (*occideritque ... cum nomine Troia*, *Aen.* 12.828).²⁷ Meanwhile, Roman names take over, even in Jupiter's carefully constructed prophecy, as the *gens Hectorea* is renamed by Ilia's son Romulus:²⁸

'Romulus excipiet gentem et Mavortia condet
moenia Romanosque suo de nomine dicet.' (*Aeneid* 1.276–7)

'Romulus will in turn take up the *gens* and will found a bellicose city, and will call them Romans after his own name.'

As Jupiter continues his prophecy, Ascanius' new Julian name continues to delineate the growth of his Roman descendants: of this race, another Julian hero will be born, whose name marks him too as a discernible link between the Romans of the early empire and their Trojan ancestors:

'nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar,
imperium Oceano, famam qui terminet astris,
Iulius, a magno demissum nomen Iulo.' (*Aeneid* 1.286–8)

'Trojan Caesar will be born from a glorious beginning, who will bound his reign with the Ocean, his fame with the stars, Julius, a name inherited from great Iulus.'

Here, in Jupiter's brief proleptic history of Venus' Trojans and the Romans they will become, it is the Julian name in particular that blazons continuity, taking Aeneas' people from mythical beginnings (*pulchra ... origine*, 286) to their ultimate ends (*terminet*, 287).

²⁶ It appears in the genealogy of Trojan kings in the underworld (*Aen.* 6.650) and of an Italian warrior killed by Pallas (*Aen.* 10.400–1).

²⁷ On the genetic implications of this demand, and the ways in which mixed blood forges a connection between the Roman people and the Julian family descended from Ascanius, see Bettini 2009: 273–301.

²⁸ On the ambiguity of *gens* (nation or family), see above, p. 27.

In underscoring the nominal bond forged between Ascanius and the later Julian, Jupiter echoes the propaganda of the *gens Iulia*, which, at least since the second century BCE, had stressed the family's close ties to the mythical Trojan past of the founders of the Roman world, and its descent from the goddess Venus, Ascanius' grandmother.²⁹ As the fourth-century CE writer Servius points out in the preface to his commentary on the *Aeneid*, Virgil's evocation of the Julian myth through mention of the Julian name creates a strong link between the story he tells of what happened after Troy's fall and one member of his Roman audience in particular:

intentio Vergilii haec est, Homerum imitari et Augustum laudare parentibus; namque est filius Atiae, quae nata est de Iulia, sorore Caesaris, Iulius autem Caesar ab Iulo Aeneae originem ducit, ut confirmat ipse Vergilius 'a magno demissum nomen Iulo'. (Servius, *ad Aeneid* 1, praefatio)

Virgil's intention was this: to imitate Homer and to praise Augustus through his ancestors; for Augustus was the son of Atia, who was the daughter of Julia, Caesar's sister, Julius Caesar, mind you, who traced his ancestry from Iulus, son of Aeneas, as Virgil himself confirms when he writes 'a name inherited from great Iulus'.

Thus the repetition of the name indicates a close and continued involvement of Aeneas and his family with the Trojans' Roman future right up to the early imperial period: Julius Caesar stressed his connection to Venus more than any member of the *gens Iulia* had done before, and the link between the Julians and their Aenean ancestors was further promoted and elaborated by Augustus.³⁰ When Jupiter's prophecy emphasises that the ultimate Julian hero bears a name handed down from the noble Ascanius (*a magno demissum nomen Iulo*, 288),³¹ Virgil's

²⁹ Ogilvie 1965: 42–3; O'Hara 2007: 88, n. 29.

³⁰ On the use of Aeneas and Venus in Julian propaganda, see Erskine 2001: 17–23; J. D. Evans 1992: 35–57; Weinstock 1971: esp. 8–12, 88–9, 253–6.

³¹ For *demissus* used to refer to genealogical descent cf. *ab alto* / *demissum genus Aenea* (Horace, *Satires* 2.5.62–3). Also: Statius, *Thebaid* 2.613; Tacitus, *Annals* 12.58. Virgil again uses *demissum* with *nomen* to indicate the claims of descent bolstered by a meaningful name in *Georgics* 3.35–6.

readers are reminded that Ascanius' Julian name not only traces the development of the Trojans into proto-Romans but also forges a bond between the heroic founders of Rome and Rome's leaders in the present day.³²

Jupiter's Ascanius is a link, then, between the Trojan past and the Roman imperial present at the time of Virgil's writing, and a continuous story of succession can be traced in the permutations of his name. Or rather, Jupiter's Iulus is a link between Aeneas' time and Augustus', and when Jupiter imposes the name of Iulus upon Ascanius he removes any issues about a succession struggle between different descendants of Aeneas by those names. Thus we can say that Ascanius is also linked to Augustus by his new name. This, too, may appear comforting. However, the very insistence that the two names refer to one and the same individual could also serve as a reminder of stories of power struggles between rival claimants to Aeneas' throne, a reminder further highlighted by the difficulty in identifying which descendant of Aeneas is meant by the 'Julius' of Trojan origins who will limit his fame only with the stars (*Aeneid* 1.286–8). Jupiter could refer at this point either to Julius Caesar or to his great-nephew and adopted son Augustus, who took his name, and it has been suggested that Virgil is here being deliberately obscure.³³ His opacity has been attributed to the tailoring of Jupiter's prophecy to his audience, blurring the distinction between the murdered dictator and his imperial successor to avoid rehearsal of the unpleasant details of civil strife that plagued Rome during both men's careers and that made succession to the rule of Rome a much more complicated and difficult matter than it appears in Book One.³⁴ The dark shadows lurking in the lacunae

³² The Julio-Claudian emperors fostered the notion of a connection between the Julian name and Roman empire. The name was also popular in provincial inscriptions. On the prevalence of the Julian name and its various forms, see Dondin-Payre and Raepsaet-Charlier (eds) 2001, *index nominum*, 736, listing occurrences of 'Iul.', 'Iulianus', 'Iulinia', 'Iulinus', 'Iulius', 'Iullinus', 'Iullius' and 'Iullus' in inscriptions from Gaul and Germany.

³³ O'Hara 1990: 160. For a slightly different approach to the double meaning these lines can be made to bear, see Dobbin 1995, who argues that the lines concern Julius Caesar primarily, though the passage is also about Augustus. On this much-discussed issue, see also S. J. Harrison 1996; Kragerrud 1992; O'Hara 1994; Zieske 2010. D. P. Fowler 1998 allows the issue to remain undecided, speaking of 'Caesar – whoever he is' (162, n. 12).

³⁴ O'Hara 1990: 161.

of Jupiter's prophecy may be banished by the god's prediction of the Trojans' magnificent Roman future.³⁵ However, it is the very fact that there is argument about the referent of the name 'Julius' that matters for how we understand Ascanius, by pointing to the inherent lack of fixity associated with names. While Jupiter tells one story about the names of Aeneas' son, a story that puts Troy in the past by doing away with 'Ilus' and looks determinedly to a particular future focused around a specific Roman family with the introduction of 'Iulus', we should be aware that this is neither the whole story nor the only story that can be told about Aeneas' son and his names.

In our concentration on the political connotations of the new name 'Iulus', we should not forget also that while the overtly Trojan name 'Ilus' has been discarded, 'Iulus' itself is a more problematic name than Jupiter suggests. For one thing, there is an issue with the opening letter of the name: Iulus can be thought of as both a name starting with a vowel, like Ilus, and a name starting with a consonant, like Julius.³⁶ Thus the additional name given to Virgil's Ascanius is both Ilus with a vowel inserted and Julius with a vowel removed, marking him as perhaps no longer quite so obviously Trojan but also not yet Roman, a figure in transition between the two identities.³⁷ While 'Iulus' can be presented as a name that looks forward to Rome and leaves Troy (and 'Ilus') behind, it also remains a permanent reminder of Troy, still carrying an echo of the abandoned Trojan name. Moreover, Aeneas' son retains his other Trojan-sounding name, 'Ascanius', which evokes the river near Troy by the same name,³⁸ just as Hector's son Astyanax was also called 'Scamandrius' after the Scamander.³⁹ This name speaks to his Trojanness each of the forty-one times it is used in the epic. Indeed, it can be argued that the name itself echoes, enhancing its speaking nature. The Ascanius river was associated with sound in Virgil's *Georgics*, and his passage about the passion which

³⁵ Schiesaro 1993 argues that O'Hara has overstated his case for the pessimistic in Virgil's picture of the birth of Rome.

³⁶ Cowan 2009.

³⁷ Reed 2007: 156–7.

³⁸ See n. 17 above.

³⁹ On Trojan river names in the *Aeneid*, see Reed 2007: 122–3.

drives mares to ‘traverse the resounding Ascanius’ (*transque sonantem* / *Ascanium*, *Georgics* 3.269–70) was widely known.⁴⁰ Resonating here, the *Georgics* passage demonstrates again how Virgil’s poems converse allusively with each other to build meaning, as the river’s undercurrent brings to the surface the Eastern reverberations of the young hero’s alternate name. These echoes are further enhanced by the way in which the name Ascanius in its Latinate form also hints at the verb *canere* (‘to sing’, ‘to prophesy’), as we are reminded by Tiberinus’ reference to Ascanius in his prophecy of the future in Book Eight:⁴¹

‘Ascanius clari condet cognominis Albam.
haud incerta cano.’ (*Aeneid* 8.48–9)

‘Ascanius will found Alba of shining name. I prophesy things which are by no means uncertain.’

In this passage, the meaningfulness of names is again underlined as the god obliquely plays on the whiteness implicit in the ‘shining’ name of Alba Longa.⁴² And as he echoes the *Aeneid*’s famous opening (*arma virumque cano*), he also hints at the power of the name Ascanius, as well as the cognomen Iulus, to speak both of the past and the future, though what such an Eastern name might say about the Romans and their destiny is left unclear.

Meaningful Names

In this respect, the evocative naming of Virgil’s Ascanius is a typical feature of ancient epic. Names in epic encode messages, and often more than one, about the heroes who bear them. By holding out the promise that it encapsulated the truth about a figure’s

⁴⁰ It is quoted both by Servius, *ad Aen.* 1.267 and in Columella, *de Re Rustica* 6.27.5.4–5. Wijsman 1993: 317 suggests that the resounding nature of the Ascanius in the *Georgics* evokes the echoes both of Hercules’ shouts and Hylas’ when the boy is abducted by nymphs, pointing to the prominence of the verb *sonare* and its cognates in other versions of the myth (*sonaret*: Virgil, *Eclogues* 6.44; *sonitum*: Propertius 1.20.48; *resonantia*: Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 4.18). For the *Georgics* I use Mynors 1969.

⁴¹ Paschalis 1997: 64, 277, 315.

⁴² O’Hara 1996: 201. A subordinate wordplay may also echo here, with the adjective *clarus* not only looking forward to the dazzling whiteness of Alba Longa’s walls but also back to the audible clarity of the singing name ‘Ascanius’.

nature, a name could become a locus for a reader's understanding of a character and his or her role in a text. In some cases, as with the name of Odysseus, a hero's name is central to our understanding of the text itself,⁴³ and the names of epic heroes were expected to reveal the at-times complicated and conflicting truths of their natures and, consequently, of their roles in the narratives in which they appeared. Heroic etymologies pervade ancient literature, and readers familiar with the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite would be aware that Aeneas himself was significantly named:⁴⁴

‘σοὶ δ’ ἔσται φίλος υἱὸς ὃς ἐν Τρώεσσιν ἀνάξει
καὶ παῖδες παῖδεσσι διαμπερὲς ἐκγεγάονται.
τῷ δὲ καὶ Αἰνείας ὄνομ’ ἔσσεται οὐνεκά μ’ αἰνὸν
ἔσχεν ἄχος ἔνεκα βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἔμπεσον εὐνῇ·
ἀγχίθεοι δὲ μάλιστα καταθητῶν ἀνθρώπων
αἰεὶ ἄφ’ ὑμετέρης γενεῆς εἰδὸς τε φυῆν τε.’

(*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 196–201)

‘And you will have a dear son who will reign among the Trojans, and children's children after him, springing up continually. His name will be Aeneas, because I felt awful grief since I tumbled into the bed of a mortal man: yet members of your race are always the most like to gods of all mortal men in beauty and in stature.’

Here Aphrodite, in the calming prophetic role later assumed by Virgil's Jupiter, assures the anxious Anchises that their affair will result in glory. Her promise prefigures Jupiter's guarantee of the secure succession and significant name of Aeneas' son: Aphrodite swears to Anchises that he too will have a son who will rule among the Trojans, as will his children's children throughout time. His son's name will be ‘Aeneas’, to reflect, she claims, the terrible grief (αἰνὸν ... ἄχος, 198–9) that is associated with the goddess's union with a mortal. Aphrodite's etymology is influential, and seems to have motivated Virgil's naming of Aeneas' companion Achates.⁴⁵ However, her etymology is also partial. *Aineias* could

⁴³ Casali 2008: 188, n. 23; Goldhill 1991; Peradotto 1990: 94–170.

⁴⁴ Richardson 2010, who comments *ad loc.* on the ancient tradition that rulers in the Troad were descended from Aeneas, and notes the emphatic etymologising of Aeneas' name here.

⁴⁵ Casali 2008 argues that Aeneas + Achates are together the αἰνὸν ἄχος that Aphrodite refers to.

equally be derived from αἶνος (story), reflecting the fact that the goddess's union with Anchises, supposed to be a secret,⁴⁶ was, according to a story told widely elsewhere, betrayed by the boastful Trojan and thus became renowned.⁴⁷

Thus Aeneas' name, like that of his son Ascanius, is a speaking one. It evokes narrative by its echo of a word for 'story' and calls to mind the myriad stories told about him. At the same time, it reflects a particular interpretation by Aphrodite of a particular story about his conception. Lastly, the name itself is suggestive of the shameful story about Aphrodite told in this paradoxical hymn, which ought to praise the goddess but does not.⁴⁸ It performs three functions, referring to the larger tradition, to a particular story within that tradition and to a particular perspective vocalised within that story. That Ascanius' names do the same is suggested by the parallels between the two naming scenes, and further encouraged by the fact that Aeneas' encounter with Venus in Book One, subsequent to Jupiter's prophecy, is closely modelled on Anchises' encounter with Aphrodite in the Homeric Hymn.⁴⁹ Both texts reveal two things: firstly that people (and gods) can invoke specific meaning in reference to a name, and secondly that names need not be, and perhaps cannot be, firmly pinned down to mean just one thing, even when a god says so. The very act of attempting to define the meaning of a name directs attention to other stories about the name's acquisition and meaning.

We find encouragement for such an approach in Plato's fourth-century BCE *Cratylus*, where it is pointed out not only that many heroes of Homeric epic have names suited to their natures and the parts that they play in the epic cycle, but also that their names can be variously interpreted.⁵⁰ Atreus, for example, is correctly named, according to Socrates, because his various evil deeds are

⁴⁶ Aphrodite threatens Anchises with Zeus' anger if he tells anyone (286–90), and instructs him to say to anyone who asks that Aeneas is the son of a nymph, not Aphrodite (281–5).

⁴⁷ E.g. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 94.

⁴⁸ Further on the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, see Bergren 1989; De Jong 1989; P. M. Smith 1981; Walcot 1991.

⁴⁹ Reckford 1995–6: 16–22.

⁵⁰ Plato, *Cratylus* 392Bff. On the *Cratylus*, its philosophy and philosophical approaches to the illuminatory power of names, see Sedley 2003, with 78–81 on names in Homer.

‘destructive’ (ἀτηρά) to his virtue.⁵¹ And, Socrates continues, the name is like a puzzle in which Atreus’ true nature is encoded, decipherable only by those who understand about names and can recognise in the name the hero’s ‘stubbornness’ (τὸ ἀτειρές), ‘fearlessness’ (τὸ ἄτρεστον) and ‘ruinous acts’ (τὸ ἀτηρόν).⁵²

The very multiplicity of Ascanius’ names suggests that the meaning they encode is multiple, and Aeneas’ son is not alone in having multiple significant names. In the *Iliad*, for example, as we have already noted, Hector’s son has two names:⁵³ his father calls him ‘Skamandrios’ in an echo, presumably, of the river outside Troy, just as Ascanius’ first name recalls the river Askanios in Asia Minor,⁵⁴ while others give him the name ‘Astyanax’ to reflect his father’s protection of Troy.⁵⁵

ἄμα δ’ ἀμφίπολος κίεν αὐτῇ
παῖδ’ ἐπὶ κόλπῳ ἔχουσ’ ἀταλάφρονα, νήπιον αὐτῶς,
Ἐκτορίδην ἀγαπητόν, ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῶ,
τόν ῥ’ Ἐκτωρ καλέεσκε Σκαμάνδριον, αὐτὰρ οἱ ἄλλοι
Ἀστυάναντ’· οἷος γὰρ ἔρύετο Ἴλιον Ἐκτωρ. (*Iliad* 6.399–403)

Behind her came the maid, who held the tender child against her breast,
Hector’s well-loved son, like a dazzling star. His father named him
Scamandrius; other men called him Astyanax, ‘Lord of the Lower Town’,
as Hector singlehandedly guarded Troy.

The Homeric text suggests that the names given to Hector’s son convey a message about Astyanax and his father, encouraging readers to think about the ironies implicit in this naming of a child

⁵¹ Plato, *Cratylus* 395B.

⁵² Plato, *Cratylus* 395B–C. On etymologising as a *technē* see Sedley 2003: 41–50.

⁵³ Or three, counting the patronymic ‘Hectorides’.

⁵⁴ Further on the links between Ascanius and Astyanax, see pp. 65–70, 185–6.

⁵⁵ For the text see Graziosi and Haubold 2010. Astyanax is not the only epic character whose name reflects some characteristic or condition of a parent. Odysseus’ son, Telemachus, similarly bears a significant name, marking him as the son of one who fights from a distance, in reference either to Odysseus’ departure for Troy or to his prowess as an archer. And Ajax’s son, Eurysaces, reflects in his name his father’s famous shield. Further examples are discussed in Higbie 1995; Peradotto 1990: 108, 134–8, 164–5. Other double-named Homeric heroes include Aktorione/Melione, Neoptolemos/Pyrros and Paris/Alexandros, whose two names are analysed by Suter 1984, 1993, who argues that different epithets are attached to each of Paris/Alexandros’ names, demonstrating the duality in the hero’s roles as scapegoat and lover in the *Iliad*. In the *Aeneid*, we will meet another two-named hero in Book Nine, Numanus Remulus, on whom see further pp. 160–7.

famously killed during the sack of Troy by being hurled from the walls.⁵⁶ The significance of this name and the propriety of its application to Hector's son is later discussed in the *Cratylus*, where there is some debate about whether 'Astyanax' is a more meaningful name than 'Skamandrios' and where the process of interpreting names is compared to that of interpreting oracles.⁵⁷ While Plato's text here suggests that a single 'true' meaning is encapsulated in each name, to be extracted by the discerning, and implies that some names are more meaningful than others, what is really clear is that names can carry multiple meanings, all of them true depending on what aspect of a character a reader chooses to focus on.⁵⁸

We see just such a process, where names are variously interpreted depending on a reader's interests, in explanations of the name 'Iulus' in other texts, where it is commonly linked to a pivotal moment in Ascanius' own career.⁵⁹ The compendious seventh- to eighth-century CE *Servius auctus* commentary cites a first-century BCE Caesar as its authority and offers two alternative explanations for the name 'Iulus', both reliant on an alternative version of the Trojan myth to Virgil's.⁶⁰ In this version it is not Aeneas but Ascanius who kills Mezentius, after Aeneas has died.⁶¹

et occiso Mezentio Ascanium *sicut I. Caesar scribit* Iulum coeptum vocari, vel quasi ἰοβόλον, id est sagittandi peritum, vel a prima barbae lanugine quam ἰούλον Graeci dicunt, quae ei tempore victoriae nascebatur. (Servius, *ad Aeneid* 1.267)

⁵⁶ On the popularity of iconographic depictions of Astyanax's death, see Morris 1995.

⁵⁷ Socrates' unravelling of the true meaning of names is called oracular by his interlocutor, Hermogenes (Plato, *Cratylus* 396D).

⁵⁸ Ragussis 1986 goes further in his repudiation of the simple equivalence between true name and truth asserted in the *Cratylus*, arguing that the English novel contributes to the question of name and meaning by demonstrating the impossibility of the quest to pin a character down with a single name.

⁵⁹ On the tradition, see Jordan 1869: 416–19.

⁶⁰ Manuscripts name the authority variously as L. Caesar and I. Caesar, see Fraenkel 1948: 133. Probably this refers to the augur Lucius Julius Caesar, consul of 64 BCE, rather than the dictator: Bickel 1957; Jordan 1869: 401. Further on the Servian commentaries, see D. P. Fowler 1997a; Marshall 1997; Thomas 2001: 93–121.

⁶¹ On Servius' etymologies, see R. G. Austin 1964: 216, with bibliography; Dingel 2001; O'Hara 1996: 121, 220–1; Richard 1986. As Casali 2009: 305 notes, 'the first reader of the *Aeneid* ... expected Ascanius, and not Aeneas, to put an end to the war'. He goes

And after Mezentius had been killed the story goes (as Caesar writes) that Ascanius began to be called Iulus, either to suggest ‘arrow-shooter’, that is to say skilled at shooting arrows, or from the first down of his beard, which the Greeks call *ioulos*, and which was sprouting at the very time of his victory.

This is an expansion on the original comment in Servius’ fourth-century CE work, which drew on Cato’s second-century BCE history of Rome’s foundations,⁶² and stated simply that Aeneas’ son was called Iulus after his killing of Mezentius, due to the beard that the prince first began to grow at that time.⁶³ In the Servian tradition, then, and presumably also in the second and first centuries BCE, one way of interpreting Ascanius’ Julian name was as a reflection of a significant point in the prince’s personal history rather than that of his people: this ‘Iulus’ is not ‘Ilus’ made Julian with an added ‘u’ but instead a Latinised Greek appellation that refers either to the prince’s skill in archery or to his first growth of facial hair, markers of his initiation into manhood.⁶⁴

To these explanations of Ascanius’ Julian name, we can add another etymology of ‘Iulus’, which is presented in the fourth-century CE *Origo gentis romanae*. There the name is alleged to derive from the acknowledgement, by the Latin people, of Ascanius’ descent from Jupiter after their young leader had demonstrated his heroism in defeating Mezentius:⁶⁵

igitur Latini Ascanium ob insignem virtutem non solum Iove ortum crediderunt, sed etiam ... primo Iolum, dein postea Iulum appellarunt; a quo Iulia familia manavit, ut scribunt Caesar libro secundo et Cato in Originibus. (*Origo gentis romanae* 15.5)

on to discuss the naming traditions around Ascanius’ legendary killing of Mezentius at 307–8, 310–11.

⁶² For Cato as the source of the story that it was Ascanius who defeated Mezentius after Aeneas’ death, see also Servius, *ad Aen.* 4.620.

⁶³ *et occiso Mezentio Ascanium Iulum coeptum vocari, a prima barbae lanugine quae ei tempore victoriae nascebatur.* ‘And it is said that after the killing of Mezentius Ascanius began to be called Iulus from the first down of his beard, which was sprouting at the very time of his victory.’

⁶⁴ On Ascanius and initiation see below, pp. 146–7, 160–7. These discussions of the name ‘Iulus’ have been dismissed as ‘the usual playful etymologies of no consequence’: Weinstock 1971: 9. Moseley 1926: 64 is more accepting. The important point, however, is not whether the etymologies are linguistically convincing, but that they are part of the tradition and encode a particular understanding of the character of Ascanius.

⁶⁵ For the text see Sehlmeier 2004. On the derivation of Iulus from Iovis and the Julian connection to Vediovis, see Ribezzo 1930; Weinstock 1971: 8–12.

Therefore, on account of his singular heroism, the Latins not only believed that Ascanius was descended from Jupiter but also ... at first called him 'Iolus', then afterwards 'Iulus', from whom the Julian family descended, as Caesar writes in Book Two and Cato in his *Origines*.

Again Caesar and Cato are cited as sources, while another second-century BCE writer, Aulus Postumius, is mentioned a little earlier as a further authority for this fourth possible derivation of Ascanius' Julian name. This derivation similarly stresses the name as a marker of Ascanius' adulthood, being given 'on account of his singular heroism' (*ob insignem virtutem*).

In all these interpretations of the name, including Virgil's, 'Iulus' is presented as an additional appellation, signifying something about how Aeneas' son is to be perceived. Indeed, Virgil highlights the explanatory force of the name by describing it as a *cognomen*.⁶⁶ But in all accounts apart from Virgil's, the name is attained after Ascanius had grown up, taken his father's throne and killed Mezentius. It is those other explanations which better fit what we might expect a *cognomen* to denote. A *cognomen* may simply distinguish the branch of a family, and that indeed is the eventual destiny of the name Iulus that is given to Ascanius in Book One, when it transforms again into Julius. However, *cognomina* frequently refer to specific traits or achievements of the holders of these names, and are bestowed on an adult to mark that trait or achievement. Even the stress on the present moment of Jupiter's addition of the name to Ascanius suggests that Iulus is this kind of *cognomen*, a name commemorating a significant achievement rather like the *cognomina ex virtute* given to Roman generals or adopted by the emperors.⁶⁷ It is marked, therefore, that Virgil's explanation differs from the others not only by connecting Ascanius' new *cognomen* to an old name reminiscent of his Trojan past, but also, and more significantly, by casting the name as a verbal

⁶⁶ *Aen.* 1.267. On the evolution of *cognomina* from unofficial nicknames to inheritable appellations, see Dickey 2002: 47.

⁶⁷ On the meaningfulness of *cognomina* in Rome, see Corbeill 1996: 57–98. Famous adopters of *cognomina ex virtute* include Octavian, who took the meaningful name 'Augustus' in 27 BCE, using the new name to tell a story about his role in his people's unfolding history, as noted by Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 7.2.

promise of the family that he was to engender, rather than as a sign of his own accession to manhood.

Jupiter's explanation of the name stresses Ascanius' symbolic function rather than his agency: the name encapsulates a family's promise, and thus an empire's, and in marking its bearer as a symbol, it also denies him development. It is likely that Virgil did this deliberately in full awareness of the alternate tradition found in Cato, Caesar and Aulus Postumius. Indeed, Servius thought that Virgil obliquely hinted at that tradition in the very act of recounting his radically different explanation for Ascanius' acquisition of the name Iulus:

ab hac autem historia ita discedit Vergilius, ut aliquibus locis ostendat, non se per ignorantiam, sed per artem poeticam hoc fecisse, ut illo loco 'quo magis Italia mecum laetere reperta': ecce ἀμφιβολικῶς dixit, ostendit tamen Anchisen ad Italiam pervenisse. (Servius, *ad Aen.* 1.267)

In this way [explaining Iulus as he does], Virgil departs from the traditional version just discussed, in order to demonstrate, as he does at a number of points, that he has done so not through ignorance but through poetic design, like in that passage 'so you may rejoice all the more in your discovery of Italy along with me' [*Aen.* 6.718]: he spoke with dual meaning, you see, yet showed that Anchises had made it to Italy [in other versions of the story].

Here, Servius' main focus is on the potential ambiguity of *mecum* in the line quoted from Book Six.⁶⁸ Modern scholars have found the suggestion of an allusion to a different story there unconvincing.⁶⁹ However, the fact that Servius makes the suggestion during his discussion of the imposition of the name 'Iulus' on Ascanius in Book One indicates an awareness among his early readers of the traditions from which Virgil deviated. While deliberate allusion to alternative traditions is even harder to justify in Book One than in Book Six,⁷⁰ we can nonetheless feel justified in invoking

⁶⁸ Since in the *Aeneid* Anchises dies before Aeneas arrives in his new homeland, it makes most sense to take the prepositional phrase with the verb *laetere*, suggesting that father and son share the joy in the son's achievement. Given its placement in the line, however, it could also imply that Anchises had been with Aeneas when he arrived in Italy, and thus act as an oblique reference to other versions of the story, despite the fact (*tamen*) that they run counter to the version followed in the *Aeneid*.

⁶⁹ O'Hara 2007: 85.

⁷⁰ There may be an allusion to the tradition that the name Iulus derived from ἰοβόλος later in the *Aeneid* when this is the name used as Apollo addresses Ascanius after he has shot Numanus Remulus (*Aen.* 9.640). See Hardie 1994, *ad Aen.* 9.590–1 and O'Hara 1996: 220–1.

those earlier traditions when we read the passage in Book One. And when we do so, we can see hints of another important aspect of Virgil's Ascanius, who is never allowed to become completely adult in the *Aeneid*.

From the beginning of Virgil's epic, then, Ascanius' complex role within the text is marked by his names. He is both a proto-Julian and a Trojan, and thus an important reminder of the ongoing, if troubling, importance of Troy to Augustan Rome. His names and naming suggest a narrative of continuation and evolution, but also hint at discontinuities, regression and the existence of alternative points of view. Most importantly, perhaps, they establish him as a symbol at the same time of the text and its forward momentum and of narrative paths not taken, of stories evoked but never allowed to develop.

CHAPTER 4

ANDROMACHE AND DIDO

Narrative paths not taken feature strongly in the early books of the *Aeneid*, where a number of dead ends threaten Ascanius and the Roman future he represents. His multiple names have already suggested that he acts as a symbol of the past, the future and, in particular, the difficult transformative space between.¹ Now encounters with a number of regal women bring to the fore the difficulty of the transition, with the suggestion that Ascanius might be simply too Trojan to have a future at all. This chapter explores the ways in which Ascanius is appropriated as a symbol not by the god Jupiter or his Julian descendants but by human characters in the epic. While he begins to engage in the unfolding of the narrative, female perspectives in particular illustrate the extreme adaptability of his character. Ascanius' susceptibility to appropriation allows him a central role in various imagined futures, each of which threatens the part laid out for him in the prophecy of Book One.

Andromache

The question 'what about Ascanius?' is put directly by the first of the two women whose perspectives on Aeneas' son are investigated here:

'quid puer Ascanius? superatne et vescitur aura?
quem tibi iam Troia ...
ecqua tamen puero est amissae cura parentis?
ecquid in antiquam virtutem animosque virilis
et pater Aeneas et avunculus excitat Hector?' (*Aeneid* 3,339–43)

'What about the boy Ascanius? Does he survive and draw nourishing breath? Whom for you already when Troy ...? Yet does he, still a boy,

¹ On the anxieties of transformation in the *Aeneid*, see Hardie 1992.

have any care for his lost mother? Do his father Aeneas and uncle Hector inspire him in any way to old-time heroism and manly spirits?"

The speaker is Andromache, the widow of Hector, who was the brother of Ascanius' mother Creusa. Aeneas meets her in Buthrotum, a new city on the Ionian Sea, and she tells him the story of what happened to her after Troy's fall. It is a story dominated by the sons of towering heroes: taken as a concubine by Pyrrhus (son of Achilles), Andromache was later given in marriage to the Trojan seer Helenus (son of Priam). After Pyrrhus' death at the hands of Orestes (son of Agamemnon), Helenus inherited part of his kingdom, and founded Buthrotum (325–36).

Parents, children and inheritance are repeatedly stressed in Andromache's account of her history. When she speaks of the men and women who populate the story of Troy's fall and its aftermath, she constantly sees them in terms of their family connections. Polyxena, her sister-in-law, is the daughter of Priam (*Priamea virgo*, 321). Pyrrhus, her captor and master, has the disdainful attitude one would expect of the offspring of Achilles (*stirpis Achilleae fastus*, 326).² Hermione, Pyrrhus' new bride, is Leda's granddaughter (*Ledaeam Hermionem*, 328) and, since she is also Menelaus' daughter, marriage with her is a Spartan union (*Lacedaemoniosque hymenaeos*, 328). Orestes, who considered Hermione his, is hounded by the furies that pursue criminal acts (*scelerum furiis agitatus Orestes*, 331), reminding us that he killed his mother, who murdered his father, who sacrificed his sister Iphigenia, as only part of an escalating cycle of crime that characterised the descendants of Tantalus. Orestes then beheads Pyrrhus at altars described as 'fatherly' (*patriasque obtruncat ad aras*, 332), recalling (and avenging) the altars at which Pyrrhus beheaded first Priam's son Polites, with Priam watching on, and then Priam the father as well (*natum ante ora patris, patrem qui obtruncat ad aras*, *Aen.* 2.663).³ It is small wonder, then, that when Andromache starts to ask Aeneas questions about his experiences

² On the tree metaphors such as *stirps* and how they sharpen the theme of succession in the *Aeneid*, see Gowers 2011.

³ The implications of the adjective *patrias* to describe an altar in the temple of Apollo at Delphi and not in Pyrrhus' homeland are further discussed by Horsfall 2006, *ad Aen.* 3.332.

after Troy, she soon focuses on the fate of his son Ascanius (339), the fact that Ascanius' mother Creusa was lost at Troy (341) and Ascanius' heroic inheritance from his father and his uncle Hector (342–3). However, it soon becomes clear that Andromache's perceptions of inheritance, unlike Jupiter's, look backwards rather than forwards, and have the potential to be far less fruitful than the promises of rising generations, multiplication and limitless growth that were heard in Book One.

Indeed, Andromache's is one of the most outspoken voices of dissent from Jupiter's programme for recovering from Troy's fall by moving on to something different.⁴ Her perspective is shaped by disturbed nostalgia, and her world is one of the dead,⁵ as is immediately clear when the Trojans come upon her worshipping and grieving for her dead husband Hector at an empty tomb (300–5). Telling the story later to Dido, Aeneas recalls how Andromache was terrified by the sight of him and his armed Trojan companions. Maddened (*amens*, 307), and unsure whether they are ghosts or mortals, she begins to speak to them by questioning their reality:

‘verane te facies, verus mihi nuntius adfers,
nate dea? vivisne? aut, si lux alma recessit,
Hector ubi est?’ (*Aeneid* 3.310–12)

‘Is it as a true vision that you present yourself to my eyes? Do you come to truly bring me news, son of the goddess? Are you alive? Or, if the nurturing light has left you, where is Hector?’

Andromache's doubt about whether the Trojans are phantoms or genuinely embodied as they seem to be betrays a truth about Buthrotum that has already been suggested by Aeneas' reference to the empty tomb (*ad tumultum ... inanem*, 304) and waters of the false Simois (*falsi Simoentis ad undam*, 302) where he found Andromache sacrificing to Hector. Buthrotum is full of false images – it is an empty and deceptive replica of Troy that cannot truly recreate the original.⁶

⁴ On the psychological framework of the Trojans' movement towards Rome, see Quint 1993: 50–96.

⁵ Bettini 1997; Quint 1982–3.

⁶ The ‘twin altars’ (*geminas ... aras*, 305) at which Andromache is sacrificing to Hector when Aeneas first meets her also suggest the twinning of Troy at Buthrotum.

The differences between Andromache's and Aeneas' perception of the city heighten the suggestion that Andromache does not offer a model for successful recovery and growth. Recounting her history to Aeneas when they first meet, Andromache introduces her city. She explains that Buthrotum is set in plains named by her husband, the Trojan Helenus, after Chaon of Troy, and that the city itself is a Pergama, a Trojan citadel (334–6). But when Aeneas arrives there, he recognises (*agnosco*, 351) only a 'little Troy' (*parvam Troiam*, 349), a replica of the great Trojan citadel (*simulataque magnis / Pergama*, 349–50), and a dry river course that bears the name of Xanthus (*arentem Xanthi cognomine rivum*, 350), though he embraces the entrance of a Scaean gate that is just like the one Troy had (*Scaeaque amplector limina portae*, 351). When leaving, he claims not that he sees, but that Andromache and Helenus see in Buthrotum the likeness of the river Xanthus and Troy itself rebuilt by authentic refugee Trojan hands (*effigiem Xanthi Troiamque videtis / quam vestrae fecere manus*, 497–8). His use of the word *effigies*, which can refer equally to a ghost or a false image as to a likeness,⁷ and his implication that this likeness, the 'Troy' at Buthrotum, is seen only by his hosts (*videtis*, 497), and not himself, suggests strongly that he, the true survivor and remnant of Troy, does not agree with their vision. His description of the *simulata Pergama* at Buthrotum is a further hint of this disagreement, recalling his earlier claim that he and the Trojan survivors were the true second Pergama, all that remained of Troy after the Greek attack:

'da propriam, Thymbraee, domum; da moenia fessis
et genus et mansuram urbem; serva altera Troiae
Pergama, reliquias Danaum atque immitis Achilli.' (*Aeneid* 3.85–7)

'Grant us a home of our own, Trojan Apollo: give city walls to the weary,
give us a race and a city that will stand; preserve the second citadel of
Troy, the leavings of the Greeks and of implacable Achilles.'

⁷ For *effigies* referring to a ghost see Livy 21.40.9: *effigies immo, umbrae hominum*, and to a false image see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 14.358. For a combination of ghost and replica, see Daedalus in Book Six, decorating the temple of Apollo with stories from Greek myth, unable to continue when he comes to his own mythical history and the tragic end of his fallen son Icarus: *bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro, / bis patriae cecidere manus* (32–3).

Moreover, despite its detailed similarities to the original, Andromache's little Troy clearly lacks the greatness of its legendary template,⁸ and is marked as one of several cities built or begun in the early books of the *Aeneid* that fail to fulfil the requirements of the city that Aeneas is destined to found.⁹ Evil omens, disasters and divine intervention put a stop to Aeneas' attempts to colonise Thrace and Crete and to build cities named to mark their close connection to their inhabitants' Trojan past.¹⁰ There are similar (though less dramatic) signs that Andromache's colony is an equally barren solution to the wandering Trojans' problem. The river that she has called after the Trojan Xanthus is dry (*arentem Xanthi cognomine rivum*, 350), and the replica Simois is deceptive (*falsi*, 302), as well as an *effigies*; Andromache herself is apparently childless here, and no mention is made either of her sons by the Greek Neoptolemus, who took her as a concubine after the Trojan war, or of Cestrinus, the son she is said to have had with her new husband, Helenus, Hector's brother.¹¹ Instead, Andromache clings to the dead past, still identifying her surroundings with Troy even though they are obviously different, and identifying herself as Hector's wife despite her new marriage.¹²

Andromache's perspective on the world is, in fact, wholly coloured by her insistence on reaching back to the Trojan past, now irrevocably destroyed.¹³ Moreover, she tries to claim equivalence between her perspective and that of Aeneas, seeming either not to

⁸ This is highlighted by the contrast between *parvam Troiam* and *simulataque magnis / Pergama* in 349–50. On the well-known ancient perception of imitation and *mimesis* as unsatisfactory and deceptive, see Halliwell 2002: esp. 1–33; Silk 1995.

⁹ On unsatisfactory attempts to recreate Troy in Book Three, see Hexter 1999; Quint 1982–3.

¹⁰ Aeneas plans to create (*finjo*) a ghostly colony on Thrace called by his own name (*Aeneadasque meo nomen de nomine finjo*, 18), and to name the colony on Crete after the Trojan citadel, a scheme that meets the approval of his Trojan companions (*Pergameamque voco, et laetam cognomine gentem / hortor amare focos arcemque attollere tectis*, 133–4). In Book Five, Acestes' city is named after its founder (718), but is also another mini-Troy (*hoc Ilium et haec loca Troiam / esse iubet*, 756–7).

¹¹ Pausanias 1.11.1d. Cestrinus may be a deliberate omission by Virgil, who has removed all but Ascanius' Italian rivals from the Trojan narrative in the *Aeneid*, highlighting the problems of the Latin succession, as elaborated in Gowers 2011.

¹² She names herself Hector's wife when saying farewell to Ascanius (*coniugis Hectoreae*, *Aen.* 3.488).

¹³ For the way Andromache's obsession with Hector fills her mind during her first meeting with the Trojans, see Bettini 1997: 11–16.

recognise or to reject his different destiny. At their first meeting by Hector's empty tomb, she gives an account of her history after Troy's fall that strongly implies the similarity of her experience to Aeneas', exclaiming that Polyxena, who died at Troy, was luckier than she (321–4), in an echo of Aeneas' first speech in the epic, where he similarly declared himself a reluctant survivor of Troy's fall (*Aen.* 1.94–101).¹⁴ Her attempt to link her story and Aeneas' continues when, after she has told the hero about her own survival, she inquires anxiously after the survival of his son, the passage with which this chapter began, and where – as we have seen – Andromache circles back again to Hector and the past, characterising Ascanius' survival in terms of his continued love for his lost mother, Creusa, Hector's sister, and his inheritance of the example of virtue and manliness so admirably set by his father and by his late uncle Hector.¹⁵

In this speech, we receive hints that Andromache is trying to claim Ascanius, too, as part of her own story. Her questions about whether the young prince has been spared (*superatne*, 339) and whether he has inherited the manly qualities of his father and uncle evoke a number of parallels where parental concern is expressed for a child. Underlining her associations with the dead, there are echoes of Agamemnon's ghost asking Odysseus whether Orestes still lives (*Odyssey* 11.457–61) and the shade of Achilles asking whether Pyrrhus has inherited his martial qualities and followed him into war (*Odyssey* 11.492–3).¹⁶ Since we have just been reminded by Andromache herself that Orestes killed Pyrrhus, these echoes of the *Odyssey* also serve to sharpen the edge of anxiety on Andromache's questions, suggesting not only that the questioner belongs to the world of the dead but also that the subject of

¹⁴ Compare particularly Andromache's *Troiae sub moenibus altis* (322) to Aeneas' (*Aen.* 1.95).

¹⁵ Bettini 1997 argues that her description of Hector as Ascanius' *avunculus* – *quidam humiliter* for an epic poem, according to Servius – also suggests that Hector is 'at the center of her thoughts' (15). Her final question about whether Ascanius is spurred to emulate his father and Hector will be reworked by Aeneas in Book Twelve, discussed below, pp. 183–9.

¹⁶ Further underlying Andromache's association with the dead, there is also a parallel with Creusa's ghost in Book Two, asking Aeneas to look after Ascanius (789), which is enhanced by Creusa's comparison a few lines earlier of her own fate to Andromache's (785–6).

her questions might too. Moreover, that Andromache's concern for Ascanius is similar to that which might be felt by a parent is further emphasised by the echo of the concern for his survival later expressed by Venus, where the goddess urges Jupiter to allow Ascanius at least to survive (*liceat superesse nepotem*, *Aen.* 10.47) and plans to ensure this by removing him from the battlefield.¹⁷ The suggestion that Andromache may feel, as Venus does, that the young prince is her *maxima cura* (*Aen.* 1.678) heightens the suggestion already implicit in the description of Buthrotum that association with Andromache involves diversion from the epic path towards Rome and adulthood on which Ascanius ought to be set.¹⁸

Andromache's intimate connection with Ascanius and the dangers it entails are further implied by the incomplete half-line, *quem tibi iam Troia* (340), which seems about to say something concerning Ascanius' past experiences at Troy.¹⁹ This fragment of a line is notoriously difficult to interpret, and thought by some not to belong to the *Aeneid* at all.²⁰ It requires a great deal more effort on the part of a reader to understand than the example of aposiopesis to which it is sometimes compared, where Neptune dramatically breaks off his speech, choking with rage in Book One at the thought that the winds had been let loose upon the world without his authority, winds which he ... (*quos ego ...!*, *Aen.* 1.135).²¹ There, it is easy to supply a phrase that makes sense of the scrap of broken speech (winds which he alone should control, for example). In Andromache's case, the sense is not so immediately clear, and it is hard to know what she suggests has been

¹⁷ We also hear an echo of Venus' question to Aeneas during the fall of Troy about whether Creusa and Ascanius survive: *superet coniunxne Creusa / Ascanisque puer?* (*Aen.* 2.597–8), where she similarly stresses her *cura* (599) for Aeneas' family.

¹⁸ Note that Buthrotum is characterised by its *quies* (495). On Venus and the removal of Ascanius from epic, see further below, pp. 124–34.

¹⁹ The hemistich is the only one in the *Aeneid* that does not make sense by itself. Numerous attempts have been made to complete it, for which see Conington 1884 and Horsfall 2006, *ad loc.*

²⁰ Horsfall 2006 does not go so far but suggests that the 'elusive four words' are 'a marginal scrap which has crept into the text ... not necessarily at quite the right spot' and advocates 'honourable retirement in the apparatus as Virgilian, but misplaced'.

²¹ On the aposiopesis here, see R. G. Austin 1971, *ad loc.* Though, as Austin remarks, such broken-off speech is characteristic more of the strong emotions of comedy than tragedy, we might compare the grief that prevents Daedalus from completing his depiction of Icarus' fall (*Aen.* 6.30–3).

done to Aeneas' son during or after Troy's fall.²² However, her enigmatic 'whom for you already when Troy' is not perhaps as wholly opaque as it has seemed. The collocation of *tibi* referring to Aeneas and *Troia* evokes firstly the earlier instruction given by Hector's ghost to Aeneas, saying that Troy entrusted its sacred objects and tutelary gods to his care (*sacra suosque tibi commendat Troia penatis*, *Aen.* 2.293). Secondly, we are reminded of the macabre scene earlier in Book Three in which a voice from deep within a funeral mound (*imo* / ... *tumulo*, 39–40) identified the occupant of the unmarked grave as Priam's son Polydorus, foully slain by the Thracian king to whom he and a wealth of gold had been sent when Troy's fortunes were in flux. Before Polydorus' name is mentioned, his kinship with Aeneas is stressed with the reminder that Troy had reared them both (*non me tibi Troia / externum tulit*, 42–3). The echoes are enhanced by other common elements between the passages: Hector, Troy's fall, death and a Trojan tomb on a foreign shore. Taken together they underline the suggestion both that Ascanius should survive, like the Penates, and that he might not have, like Polydorus and so many other princes of Troy including Hector and Andromache's own son, Astyanax.²³

Thus, though incomplete, there is some justification for believing that the half-line is in its proper place. What Andromache might have intended to say is obscure, but the scrap of speech does make sense in its context, in its dual allusions to the need and the uncertainty of Ascanius' survival and in its stress, once more, on Troy, the city which fills Andromache's thoughts. Echoes of the ghostly voices of Hector and Polydorus also serve to heighten awareness that Andromache seems to know more than she perhaps should about what happened during Troy's fall and its aftermath, again stressing the slightly uncanny intimacy of her connection

²² The difficulty is compounded by not knowing whether *Troia* is a nominative, an ablative in an incomplete ablative absolute, as I have taken it here and as at (for example) *Aen.* 2.108, 637, or an adjective agreeing with some unexpressed noun to come in the unfinished line. It could also be an isolated ablative of separation or origin, as at *Aen.* 5.61.

²³ The threat is summed up in an elegant piece of wordplay by Hui 2011: 154: '[Andromache's] interrupted lineage [is] opposed to the lineage of Aeneas that is allegedly continuous, but is entrusted to a broken line *quem tibi iam Troia*.'

with Aeneas and his family. Though she asks after Ascanius, she knows what has happened to Creusa, for example,²⁴ and this too strengthens the parallels that she sees between her own experiences and those of Aeneas' family. Her question in line 341 is, as John Conington notes *ad loc.*, 'precisely what might be spoken ... by a mother possessed with the image of her own lost boy, and wondering whether the separation had really entailed a breach in their love of each other'. Wondering whether Ascanius lives to love his lost mother, demonstrating her own concern for the child and hinting at the memory of her own loss, Andromache suggests an equivalence between her own experience and that of Ascanius which implies that each fills a need in the other. Indeed, her fruitless lament after she finishes speaking (*talia fundebat lacrimans longosque ciebat / incassum fletus*, 344–5) suggests that she is thinking about Ascanius as if he were her own son and his survival uncertain.

Later, when saying goodbye to the young prince as the Trojans leave Buthrotum, she openly demonstrates her desire to adopt Ascanius, proving that she sees him not simply as a potential inheritor of Aeneas and Hector's *virtus*, but as a substitute, a double, for her own dead child, Astyanax. Offering him gifts, she urges him to accept them as a last memorial of her love, as he is to her a last memorial and replica of Astyanax, who would have been the same age as Ascanius, had he lived:²⁵

'accipe et haec, manuum tibi quae monumenta meorum
sint, puer, et longum Andromachae testentur amorem,
coniugis Hectoreae. cape dona extrema tuorum,
o mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago:
sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat,
et nunc aequali tecum pubesceret aevo.' (*Aeneid* 3.486–491)

'Take also these gifts, my handiwork, to be reminders to you and to testify to the lasting love of far-off Andromache, wife of Hector. The last gifts of your own flesh and blood: take them, you who are the only image of my

²⁴ It is even possible that the half-line refers to Creusa entrusting care of Ascanius to Aeneas as she does in their final exchange in Book Two (789).

²⁵ On the parallels drawn between Ascanius and Astyanax throughout the *Aeneid*, see Feldman 1957–8. Andromache's *o mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago* (*Aen.* 3.489) is echoed by Ovid's Venus, with reference to Julius Caesar as the only reminder left of Trojan Ascanius, *quod de Dardanio solum mihi restat Iulo* (*Metamorphoses* 15.767). See further Hardie 2015, *ad loc.*

Astyanax left to me. Thus did he bear his eyes, thus he his hands, thus his face; and now he would have grown to be just the same age as you.'

In Andromache's eyes, Ascanius recalls his cousin in every feature. He has the same eyes, the same hands, the same facial appearance as Astyanax (*sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat*, 490): he is the living image of the young prince lost with Troy. By detailing the physical likeness that Ascanius bears to his lost cousin, Andromache recalls the scene in the *Odyssey*, where Menelaus acknowledges that the young traveller who has come incognito to his court bears a close and detailed physical resemblance to Odysseus, and acknowledges also that Odysseus probably is his father, as Helen had suggested:²⁶

‘οὐτῶ νῦν καὶ ἐγὼ νοέω, γύναι, ὥς σὺ εἴσκεις
κείνου γὰρ τοιοῖδε πρόδες τοιαῖδε τε χεῖρες
ὀφθαλμῶν τε βολαὶ κεφαλῇ τ’ ἐφύπερθέ τε χαῖται.’ (*Odyssey* 4.148–50)

‘I see the likeness now, wife, as you do: such were his hands, such his feet, such the glance of his eyes, such his head and hair above.’

However, there is a significant dissimilarity between the resemblance of Telemachus to Odysseus and that of Ascanius to Astyanax. Telemachus is Odysseus' son, and is expected to resemble him in appearance as well as in character.²⁷ Ascanius, Astyanax's *imago*, is his cousin, and while physical resemblance between them might be natural, it does not bear the same burden of expectation and approval. Indeed, the dissatisfactions of the cities like Buthrotum that reproduce Troy throughout the early books of the *Aeneid* hint already at problems with the idea that Ascanius

²⁶ For the text see West 1981. The connection between the two passages is strengthened by the echo in Andromache's *sic ... sic ... sic ...* (490) of Menelaus' *τοιοῖδε ... τοιοῖδε* (149). Later, Seneca was to echo both passages in the *Troades* where his tragic Andromache laments Astyanax's too-close resemblance to Hector (*nimumque patri similis*, 464), again with the repetition *sic ... / sic ... sic ...* (466–7). See further Zissos 2008: 206–7.

²⁷ Telemachus' physical likeness to Odysseus is a recurrent theme in the *Odyssey*, and is frequently commented on with wonder: e.g. *Odyssey* 1.207–9, 3.123–5 and 4.140–6. Concurrent with this motif is the importance of his living up to his father's heroic standards, a more difficult task, as noted by Athena, *Odyssey* 2.276–7. For this theme see Euripides, *Children of Heracles* 324–8. Sons who fail to live up to their father's example are condemned, as Diomedes is in the *Iliad* by Agamemnon (4.370–400) and Athena (5.800–13).

might replicate Astyanax, and closer scrutiny of the implications of the resemblance heightens these concerns.²⁸

Resemblance between one generation and another can be highly desirable, as can be seen, for example in Evander's recognition of Aeneas as Anchises' son in Pallanteum, by his speech, his voice and his face:²⁹

Dixerat Aeneas. ille os oculosque loquentis
iamdudum et totum lustrabat lumine corpus.
tum sic pauca refert: 'ut te, fortissime Teucrum,
accipio agnoscoque libens! ut verba parentis
et vocem Anchisae magni vultumque recordor!' (*Aeneid* 8.152–6)

Aeneas had spoken. Evander gazed long upon his face and eyes as he spoke and traversed his whole body with his gaze. Then he replied briefly as follows: 'How welcome you are, bravest of the Trojans! How gladly I recognise you! How I recollect your father's words, the voice and expression of great Anchises!'

Similarly, in Rome, the ancestral *imagines* displayed in *atria* were expected to function as inspirational models for *virtus* in precisely the way that Andromache earlier suggested Aeneas and Hector should for Ascanius.³⁰ For a son or daughter to be a living memorial to the moral and warlike excellence of their ancestors was praiseworthy:³¹ such resemblances stressed generational continuity, of the kind we will see in the *lusus Troiae* of Book Five, where again those who recognise physical likeness between generations will respond with delight.³²

²⁸ Further on children and cities as replicas, see below, pp. 83–6.

²⁹ On the head, and particularly the face, as an important identity marker in the Roman world, see Stewart 2003: 46–78.

³⁰ On the *imagines*, see Flower 1996. Their power to inspire is mentioned, for example, by Cicero, *In Pisonem* 1; Juvenal, *Satires* 8.1–23; and Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum* 4.5–6. The importance that sons resemble their fathers in Augustan Rome is seen, for example, in Dio's quote from Augustus' speech to encourage marriage and the propagation of children, 56.3.

³¹ For a son as a replica (*effigies atque imago*) of his father, see Livy 5.18. Agrippina is an *imago vera* of Augustus (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.52), while Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus not only follows the pattern of military excellence set by his father, Aemilius Paullus, but exceeds him by being renowned for his eloquence as well (Cicero, *de Officiis* 1.116). Valerius Maximus discusses both inborn talent (3.1) and sons who degenerate from the admirable examples of their ancestors (3.5), on which see Bloomer 1992: 28. The theme is played with by Propertius 4.11.29–48 on Cornelia, who did not disgrace her ancestry, on which see Johnson 1997.

³² Discussed below, pp. 81–2.

The resemblance of Ascanius to Astyanax is not, however, an example of generational continuity. In fact, when Andromache calls Ascanius an *imago* of her lost son, she suggests quite the opposite of continuity. An *imago* can refer not just to a replica, or an ancestral image, but also to a ghost,³³ and when we scrutinise Andromache's farewell to Ascanius, we can see hints that, like her colony, it offers only a barren and eerie future, with no promise of development or growth. Remembrance and memorialisation are strong themes in her speech: she calls the gifts that she offers her *monumenta* (486) and hopes that they will bear witness (*testentur*, 487) to her enduring love. Not only do these words reinforce the queen's tendency to look nostalgically to the past, but they also carry strong intimations of the lack of life in the past to which she looks so fixedly. *Monumenta* are memorials of people or events of the past, and particularly of the dead,³⁴ while the gifts that bear witness to Andromache's enduring love might also, in this deathly context, be read as a testamentary provision of this affection, the only thing to survive beyond the grave. There is a strong suggestion, then, that Andromache herself, living in a dry and inferior replica of Troy, is as one dead to the Trojans who are to move forward to Italy. Her last gifts (*dona extrema*, 488) are not only final because the Trojans are leaving but also because Troy has fallen and her life among the living has ended; she has consigned herself to a world dominated by the shadows of the dead.³⁵ Claiming Ascanius as a disturbingly ghostly Astyanax (489),³⁶ she asserts him as part of this ghost world, abducting him – if only in her imagination – from Aeneas' journey forwards to Rome.³⁷

³³ The meanings of *imago* are discussed by Flower 1996: 35. For the *imagines* that haunt Ovid in his exile, see G. D. Williams 1991: 171–2. See, in a literary context, Seneca: *imago res mortua est* (*Epistles* 84.8). Imitating Astyanax is in any case a deadly process, given the popularity of depicting his death at the hands of the Greeks on vases, for which see Morris 1995.

³⁴ E.g. Varro, *de Lingua Latina* 6.49: *monimenta quae in sepulcris, et ideo secundum viam, quo praetereuntis admoneant et se fuisse et illos esse mortalis*.

³⁵ Compare Aeneas, who has survived through *extrema* and is moving on to Rome: *vitamque extrema per omnia duco*, 315. See Horsfall 2006, *ad Aen.* 3.488 on the repeated associations of *extrema* with death in the *Aeneid*.

³⁶ On the uneasiness caused by doubles in ancient narrative, see Vernant 1983: 305–20, and in modern film, Freeland 2004. On disturbing doubles elsewhere in the *Aeneid*, see Hardie 1993a.

³⁷ A hint of this association of Ascanius with the dead might also be seen in her earlier mention of his *cura* for his lost mother (341), which Horsfall 2006, *ad loc.* suggests could refer specifically to funeral rites.

Though Aeneas has some sympathy with Andromache's nostalgic attachment to Troy,³⁸ he replies in a way that denies the rival claim of her *parva Troia* to his son. First, he firmly contrasts the destinies of his and Andromache's people:³⁹

'... nos alia ex aliis in fata vocamur.
vobis parta quies' (*Aeneid* 3.494–5)

'We hear voices from another source summoning us to another destiny.
You have already accomplished peace'

He then promises that he will build a twin city for Buthrotum by the Tiber, thus creating a small family of cities with Trojan descent and a shared past. At the same time, however, he reminds Andromache that she has no *nepotes* to ensure the survival of her branch of this family, no glorious future like the one that awaits the Trojans:⁴⁰

'si quando Thybrim vicinaque Thybridis arva
intraro gentique meae data moenia cernam,
cognatas urbes olim populosque propinquos,
Epiro Hesperiam (quibus idem Dardanus auctor
atque idem casus), unam faciemus utramque
Troiam animis; maneat nostros ea cura nepotes.' (*Aeneid* 3.500–5)

'If I ever get to the Tiber and the fields next to the river and see walls granted to my people, then one day we'll have twinned cities and related peoples, we will make Hesperia one with Epirus (with Dardanus the originator of both of them and for each the same ends), and each will be Trojan at heart: let that remain to be attended to by our descendants.'

Buthrotum thus demonstrates two very different responses to Troy's fall in competition with each other, with the question of generational continuity at the heart of each.⁴¹ Ascanius is, naturally, an important figure in thinking about the future in such terms. He is not, however, mentioned by Aeneas, and instead

³⁸ He embraces the Scaean gate (351) and the Trojans too do not fail to enjoy the city's likeness to their own (352). See further Seider 2013: 90.

³⁹ The childbirth metaphor in *parta* (495) underscores the barrenness of Buthrotum: the only thing that is engendered there is a lack of action (*quies*).

⁴⁰ Aeneas' parting *maneat nostros ea cura nepotes* (505) is a cruel reminder of Andromache's question, *ecqua tamen puero est amissae cura parentis?* (341).

⁴¹ For the diverging views on the future displayed by Andromache and Aeneas, see also Hardie 1993b: 16–17; Reed 2007: 119–20; Seider 2013: 86–92.

we see him only through the eyes of Hector's widow. For Andromache, Ascanius – as the spitting image of his dead cousin Astyanax – is both a reminder of what she has lost and a symbol of what she tries, in vain, to recreate. Looking through him back to Astyanax and to Astyanax's father, she hopes that Ascanius will re-embody Hector's old-time heroism (*antiquam virtutem*, 342), a hope later to be expressed by Aeneas himself.⁴² Aeneas' visit to Buthrotum shows us, however, that its creative anachronism is sterile, and the hopes that Andromache hangs upon Ascanius' shoulders go nowhere but the grave. He escapes them, leaving Buthrotum with his father to move towards the expansive future predicted by Jupiter, but we are nonetheless reminded both of the many Trojan princes who did not escape Troy and of his close and perilous likeness to them. Though not like Astyanax, in that he still lives, the fact that he can be shaped into an image of Astyanax by a woman desperate to see the dead past continue suggests that his mutability, and particularly his Trojanness, is not without its dangers.

Dido

Similar concerns to do with survival, generational continuity and family likeness are raised during Aeneas' stay with another royal woman, in Carthage: Dido, whose experiences, as an exile and as the founder and ruler of a city, also correspond closely with Aeneas'.⁴³ The substitution of one child for another here becomes real, and the similarity of a small replica to a larger heroic predecessor carries deadly consequences. In the first book of the epic, where recognition of Aeneas as a heroic survivor of Troy is established as a vital issue,⁴⁴ Ascanius is abducted, and

⁴² For suggestions in the *Aeneid* that *antiquus* denotes the obsolete, see Reed 2007: 107, 131–2, 152. Further on Aeneas' echo of Andromache's wish in Book Twelve, see below, pp. 185–6.

⁴³ Fenik 1959; Segal 1987.

⁴⁴ Aeneas identifies himself twice: *sum pius Aeneas* (378), to Venus, and *adsum, / Troius Aeneas* (595–6) to Dido. Dido wonderingly questions his identity: *tunc ille Aeneas* (617), though convinces herself of his credentials without any further proof. Aeneas recognises himself among the Trojan scenes depicted on Juno's temple: *se quoque principibus permixtum agnovit Achivis* (488).

an unrecognised erotic replica takes his place. As Cupid plays Ascanius' role and contributes materially to Dido's downfall, the destructive consequences of being deceived by resemblance and desire are heavily underlined, while failure to recognise the young prince's Roman symbolism leads not simply to a barren ghost life, as in Buthrotum, but potentially to death. Carthage highlights the malleability of the young Ascanius, who calls to mind not only his cousin Astyanax and uncle Hector but also his divine relative Cupid and semi-divine father Aeneas, and we see again how closely the fate of Virgil's youngest hero is tied to the unfolding of Jupiter's epic script.

The introduction of Venus' plan to substitute Cupid for Ascanius stresses both its deceptiveness and the harm it will do to Dido:⁴⁵

'tu faciem illius noctem non amplius unam
falle dolo et notos pueri puer indue vultus,
ut, cum te gremio accipiet laetissima Dido
regalis inter mensas laticemque Lyaeum,
cum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet,
occultum inspires ignem fallasque veneno.' (*Aeneid* 1.683–8)

'For no longer than a single night, assume his appearance guilefully and, a child yourself, take on the child's known guise, so that when happiest Dido takes you into her lap amid the royal banquet tables and flowing wine, when she gives you embraces and plants sweet kisses on you, then you may breathe hidden fire into her and beguile her with poison.'

Cupid is instructed to assume Ascanius' 'well-known appearance' (*notos ... vultus*, 684), hinting not only at the convincing nature of his disguise, but also at the relationship between the young god and Venus' Trojan grandson, which makes the disguise all the easier.⁴⁶ This close relationship, however, also makes it all the easier for the goddess to make her own claims to Ascanius. While Cupid is held in Dido's lap in Carthage, fanning the unseen flames

⁴⁵ Cupid is twice instructed to deceive Dido: *falle dolo* (684), and *fallasque veneno* (688). He must also inspire her with a hidden (*occultum*, 688) flame. The poison (*veneno*, 688) he is instructed to instil allows Venus to infiltrate the queen as well.

⁴⁶ The repetition *pueri puer* (684) underlines the closeness between the two young descendants of Venus. Conington 1884, *ad loc.* has a different explanation: 'it will not be difficult for you to put on the expression of a boy as you are a boy yourself. Venus removes an objection by anticipation.'

of love within her (718–19), Ascanius is nestled in the lap of the goddess of love, in her erotic Italian retreat (692–4), as far outside the epic world as if he had remained with Andromache at Buthrotum.⁴⁷

Cupid's impersonation of Ascanius is a further example of the destructively deceitful nature of substitutions and false *imagines* in the *Aeneid*, where they frequently work against the epic plot. This act of impersonation is later echoed in the phantom Aeneas, created by Juno to lure Turnus away from the battlefield in Book Ten.⁴⁸

tum dea nube cava tenuem sine viribus umbram
in faciem Aeneae (visu mirabile monstrum)
Dardaniis ornat telis clipeumque iubasque
divini adsimulat capitis, dat inania verba,
dat sine mente sonum gressusque effingit euntis,
morte obita qualis fama est volitare figuras
aut quae sopitos deludunt somnia sensus.
at primas laeta ante acies exsultat imago
inritatque virum telis et voce lacescit. (*Aeneid* 10.636–44)

Then from a hollow cloud the goddess spins a thin and strengthless shadow into the guise of Aeneas (a wonder marvellous to see) and decks it with Trojan weapons, crafting a shield and plumes for its divine head, giving it empty words, sound without intelligence, and fabricates the gait of someone walking. Such shapes flit by when one encounters death, the story goes, and dreams like this toy with our somnolent senses. But the simulacrum leaps forth joyfully in front of the foremost battlelines and provokes the hero with his weapons and challenges him aloud.

⁴⁷ Dido, *gremio* [*deum*] *fovet* (718), echoes Venus, *foctum* [*Ascanium*] *gremio* *dea tollit in altos* / *Idaliae lucos* (692–3). On the eroticism of Ascanius' stay at Venus' Italian shrine, see further below, pp. 137–8.

⁴⁸ Compare Cupid, *gressu gaudens incedit Iuli* (*Aen.* 1.690) to Venus creating the phantom, *gressusque effingit euntis* (*Aen.* 10.640), and to the phantom's joy in its task, *laeta* ... *exsultat imago* (*Aen.* 10.643). Venus' creation of the phantom Aeneas is modelled on Apollo's construction of a similar phantom at *Iliad* 5.449–50, on which see further S. J. Harrison 1991, *ad loc.* Deceitful disguise is generally seen in a negative light in the *Aeneid*: Aeneas himself had already complained about Venus' persistent and hurtful disguises, upon his first arrival in Carthage in Book One (*quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque, falsis / ludis imaginibus?* 407–8). The fake Turnus (Juturna in disguise) that baffles the hero's attempts at pursuit in Book Twelve (468–99) causes him to fling off the reins of passion and allow himself to be overtaken by the destructive qualities of *furor* and *ira*. The most famous epic phantom of the ancient world, Helen, had long been connected with deceit and its disastrously destructive consequences, on which see further N. Austin 1994.

The description of the apparition's creation emphasises the fact that it is a ghostly, dreamlike sham, echoing language we have seen already in the descriptions of Andromache's ghostly replica of Troy.⁴⁹ When Turnus sees this 'Aeneas', apparently put to flight, his response similarly echoes this falseness: he is worked up and filled with empty hope (*animo spem turbidus hausit inanem*, 648), an echo of the phantom's empty words (*inania verba*, 639). On realising that he has been deceived, the hero tries several times to kill himself, in vain, as he is carried away from the battle and back to his father's ancient city by the protective Juno (685–8). His suicidal response demonstrates how bitterly he regrets his deception, which has removed him from the adult heroic world where he belongs.⁵⁰

Moreover, the unheroic path that Turnus is lured down by the phantom is not only at odds with his own ideas about his future but also an ultimately fruitless delay of his epic destiny, as we are forcefully reminded by the discussion between Juno and Jupiter about the goddess's desire to keep the hero safe immediately prior to her creation of the phantom Aeneas. Turnus' empty hopes are an echo both of the phantom's empty words and of Juno's empty hopes that she will be able to alter the course of the war by snatching him away. Jupiter is clear that the goddess is deluded if she thinks she can change fate: *spes pascis inanis* (627), suggesting the close correspondence in the *Aeneid* between deception and personal pain and between delusion and a failure to accept the Trojans' Roman future, which will only result in further grief and destruction.⁵¹

This correspondence, indeed, is first seen in Carthage, where the deception of Dido by Venus and Cupid causes a lengthy pause in the development of the Trojans' epic plot, as she and Aeneas work together on building Carthage and the hero seems to forget his Roman quest. So dangerous does this diversion from the

⁴⁹ Note in particular *adsimulat* (639), *inania* (639), *effingit* (640) and *imago* (643), and see the discussion of similar vocabulary in Buthrotum above, pp. 60–2, 65–8.

⁵⁰ Compare Venus' desire earlier in Book Ten to protect the young Trojan by removing him to a shameful, un-epic life (*positis inglorius armis / exigat hic aevum*, 52–3).

⁵¹ Juno's reply to Jupiter underlines the challenge to destiny implicit in her defence of Turnus and persistent persecution of the Trojans, asserting her own perspective on truth and falsehood: '*nunc manet insontem gravis exitus, aut ego veri / vana feror. quod ut o*

path of destiny become that Mercury is sent by Jupiter to remind Aeneas of his true fate.⁵² Here, Ascanius is again vital to the furtherance of the narrative: Jupiter's instructions to Mercury, Mercury's admonition to Aeneas and Aeneas' explanation to Dido of why he must leave all stress the importance for Ascanius' future that the Trojans' journey should continue, reasserting the apparent orthodoxy established by Jupiter in Book One by equating proper recognition of Ascanius' claims to acceptance of the Trojans' path towards Rome.⁵³

Dido's changing attitude towards Ascanius further highlights the close interconnection in the *Aeneid* between appreciation of the Trojans' Roman future and how one views Ascanius. Her perception of Aeneas' son alters dramatically from the beginning of the Trojans' stay in Carthage to the moment of their departure. At first, she holds Ascanius in her lap, captivated by his resemblance to his father, using him as a surrogate in an attempt to cover up and at the same time to feed her passion for the Trojan hero with his substitute.⁵⁴

illum absens absentem auditque videtque,
aut gremio Ascanium, genitoris imagine capta,
detinet, infandum si fallere possit amorem. (*Aeneid* 4.83–5)

Though not in his presence she hears and sees the absent hero, or she keeps Ascanius in her lap, caught by his resemblance to his father, as though she might be able to beguile (or conceal) her unspeakable love.

Although she has already heard Andromache's story about the barrenness of *imagines* in Book Three, she has clearly not taken

potius formidine falsa / ludar' (630–2). 'A grievous end now awaits this guiltless man, or I am led astray, and void of truth. Would that I were rather deceived by false foreboding.'

⁵² As Schiesaro 2008b notes, Carthage offers a different lineage for Aeneas and 'a totally different world history' (207).

⁵³ Jupiter (232–4); Mercury (272–6); Aeneas (354–5). See above, pp. 38–48. Further on the stress on Aeneas' obligations to Ascanius in Book Four, see Eidinow 2003.

⁵⁴ The verb *fallere* (85) is ambiguous here: either Dido is hiding her love for Aeneas by cuddling a substitute, or trying to satisfy that love with Aeneas' small double. On Dido's deluded illusions, see Hardie 2002: 12–13 and *passim*. On doubles and substitution in the story of Dido and Aeneas, see Bowie 1998; Schiesaro 2008a: 105. On substitution of an image for a beloved in archaic and classical Greece, see Steiner 2001: 185–250. On the power of images to render present the absent in Rome, see Gregory 1994. For another dangerous and captivating father–son resemblance, see Seneca, *Phaedra* 646–71 with Casamento 2011, *ad loc.*

it to heart.⁵⁵ Dido, whose erotic haunting by the absent Aeneas is echoed in the doubled *absens absentem* (83), is thus entrapped by another dangerous double. Ascanius, whose two names already indicate a doubleness in his character,⁵⁶ is marked here as a focus for consideration of the unsatisfactory, and eventually fatal, consequences of accepting a substitute in the place of the real thing. Like Andromache's *simulata Pergama*, the false *imago* Ascanius offers to Dido can only lead to barrenness and grief. Moreover, although we may assume that Cupid, who was supposed only to impersonate Ascanius for one night (*noctem non amplius unam*, *Aen.* 1.683), has gone, and that the child Dido holds in her lap is the 'real' Ascanius, the changeover is not described: Cupid lingers on and the *imago* here is, potentially, doubly deceptive.⁵⁷

The idea that the child might offer a substitute for the father is further developed when the queen begins to suspect that Aeneas will not comply with the Carthaginian future she has planned. Her first frenzied response concludes with an unfulfilled wish that he had given her a son, a consolatory *parvulus Aeneas* to remind her of the Trojan by his close resemblance to his absent father:⁵⁸

'saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset
ante fugam suboles, si quis mihi parvulus aula
luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret,
non equidem omnino capta ac deserta viderer.' (*Aeneid* 4.327–30)

'At least if I had fallen pregnant with a child of yours before your flight,
if some little Aeneas played in my palace, to yet recall you in his looks,
I would not (at least so far as I am concerned) seem so completely taken
in and abandoned.'

This replica Aeneas is strongly reminiscent of Ascanius, the image of his father (*genitoris imagine*, *Aen.* 4.84), who was described as

⁵⁵ Note that Dido also gives Ascanius gifts as a pledge of her love (*monumentum et pignus amoris*, *Aen.* 5.572), making her an absent presence during the young prince's participation in the *lusus Troiae*, where recognition and doubling are also significant themes, as discussed below, pp. 78–100. Further on Andromache and Dido, see G. S. West 1983; Reed 2007: 73–128.

⁵⁶ See above, pp. 38–48. Note also that as well as being a surrogate son for Andromache, and a surrogate lover for Dido, the young prince offers to adopt Euryalus' mother if the expedition to bring Aeneas back to the beleaguered Trojan camp in Book Nine should fail (297–9).

⁵⁷ Ziogas 2010.

⁵⁸ *luderet* (329) suggests here Dido's continuing desire to be deceived.

parvus five times during the description of Troy's fall in Book Two.⁵⁹ Here, Dido seems to acknowledge the deceptive nature of such substitutions, when she says that it is only her perspective on her abandonment that might have been altered if a little Aeneas had been left in Carthage.⁶⁰ The passage also raises some concerns about the fate of this *parvulus Aeneas* and of his double, Ascanius. Book Three showed us that small replicas are potentially unsatisfactory and that little models of heroic fathers are vulnerable, a message already clear from Aeneas' description of Troy's fall in Book Two. We might suspect, then, that the fate of Dido's *parvulus Aeneas* could be worse than simply not becoming Roman, a suggestion enhanced later when, no longer content with the idea of keeping an *imago* of Aeneas in Carthage, Dido thinks of tragic revenge, wishing that she had killed Ascanius and made Aeneas eat him, as an expression of her absolute rejection of the Trojans' Roman destiny:⁶¹

'... non socios, non ipsum absumere ferro
Ascanium patriisque epulandum ponere mensis?' (*Aeneid* 4.601–2)

'Could I not have taken his companions, taken Ascanius himself by the sword and served him up for dinner on his father's table?'

The menace here is emphasised by the echo in this dark wish of the Harpy Celaeno's curse in Book Three that the Trojans would eat their tables (*absumere mensas*, 257) before finding a home.⁶² Thus multiple female voices come together in the early books of the *Aeneid* to wish doom to the Trojans, weaving an intratextual web with Ascanius at its heart. As we leave Dido in Carthage, it is clear that Ascanius, as well as the Roman future, has had a fortunate escape. Dido's failure to appreciate the Trojans' destiny had nearly derailed it and had very nearly proved fatal to Ascanius as well.

The message here, however, is not as simple as an admonition not to be recalcitrant or deceived by false resemblances like

⁵⁹ *Aen.* 2.563, 674, 677, 710, 723.

⁶⁰ For *equidem* with this sense, see *OLD equidem* 1a.

⁶¹ On Dido as a tragic figure, see Hardie 1991b; Wlosok 1976. How Dido's desire to slaughter Ascanius alters our perception of her earlier desire for a *parvulus Aeneas* is discussed by Casali 2004–5, who suggests that the *parvulus Aeneas* would have suffered a similarly gruesome fate as the one she proposes for Ascanius, killed like Medea's children in revenge for their father's betrayal. See also Schiesaro 2005.

⁶² On this episode and Ascanius' involvement in its resolution, see further below, pp. 172–83.

Dido, or Andromache, or Turnus. The *Aeneid* shows us that these characters are sympathetic and their points of view understandable. It is plausible to see Astyanax, Hector, Cupid and Aeneas in the figure of young Ascanius: the problem is that being taken by such natural resemblances might lead down a different path from the one laid down as fated by Jupiter. As a representative of his people's Roman future, Ascanius' survival is necessary, as is his participation in the journey towards Italy. The future, however, as the *Aeneid* reveals, is a tenuous thing, and Ascanius' susceptibility to appropriation is an important part of its slipperiness. Through the eyes of Andromache, Dido and others we see that his destiny remains in question in the text as various different forces seek to shape the direction of the epic. Just as his multiple names held out a promise of one true and discernible meaning to his character, which their very multiplicity and the variety of possible interpretations of them served simultaneously to obscure, so the female perspectives on Ascanius discussed in this chapter show that he can act as a surrogate for a number of desired (and disastrous) futures. The [next chapter](#) continues the discussion of competing visions of the future embodied in Virgil's Ascanius, with particular attention to the question of competing genres, already raised in the tragic overtones that shadowed both Andromache's and Dido's views of the young Trojan prince.

CHAPTER 5
TROJAN GAMES

Books Three and Four gave us Ascanius primarily from the point of view of two women. Andromache saw in him her dead son and dead husband; for Dido he represented an absent ‘husband’ and fantasy child. The ease with which Aeneas’ son could be appropriated by those promoting alternate visions of the future confirmed the impression given by Jupiter’s prophecy in Book One of the intimate connection between Ascanius and the Trojans’ Roman future. At the same time, it suggested the tenuous nature of that future which, in the person of Ascanius, could so readily be reshaped, viewed differently or turned in a very different direction. Insistent reminders to think of his son eventually turned Aeneas away from Carthage, and we next see Ascanius safe in Sicily, following his father in the ritual that opened Anchises’ funeral games in Book Five (74). These games are characterised by multiple reduplications: they anticipate and recall events within the *Aeneid*, while also reduplicating the text *in parvo*; they rework Greek epic models, while also modelling themselves after (and in the fiction of the text also before) Roman circus spectacle; they look forward to the famous Roman families who claimed descent from Aeneas’ Trojans, while also looking back to the Trojan past. They also offer a dual perspective both on individual events and on the *Aeneid* as a whole, allowing their readers opportunity to watch them from a distance and to read them sympathetically, ‘adopting the uncertain position of the figures within the narrative’.¹ Finally, they provide a foil to the rejection of the Trojan destiny shown by Dido and Andromache, while further developing the themes of appropriation, recognition, doubling and survival that we saw in the previous two books. Here again we see a

¹ Feldherr 2002: 79. The many repetitions in Book Five are also discussed by: Armstrong 2002; Farrell 1999; Galinsky 1968; Heinze 1993: 121–41; Lovatt 2005; Putnam 1965: 64–104; Quint 1993: 83–96; Rimell 2013: 106–7.

female perspective on the young prince that challenges the orthodox Roman future he represents, while the behaviour and depiction of Ascanius himself demonstrates the complexities, and the Eastward-looking nature, of that very Western destiny.

The multiple temporal perspectives of the games are strongly marked in their final event, the equestrian exercises of the *lusus Troiae*, in which Ascanius plays a starring role:

extremus formaque ante omnis pulcher Iulus
Sidonio est invectus equo, quem candida Dido
esse sui dederat monumentum et pignus amoris. (*Aeneid* 5.570–2)

Last came Ascanius, in appearance more handsome than all the rest, carried on a Carthaginian horse, which dazzling Dido had given to him as a remembrance of her and a pledge of her love.

Ascanius, not only the most handsome of all the young Trojans in the games, is the one responsible for bringing the *lusus Troiae* to Italy:

hunc morem cursus atque haec certamina primus
Ascanius, Longam muris cum cingeret Albam,
rettulit et priscos docuit celebrare Latinos,
quo puer ipse modo, secum quo Troia pubes;
Albani docuere suos; hinc maxima porro
accepit Roma et patrium servavit honorem;
Troiaque nunc pueri, Troianum dicitur agmen. (*Aeneid* 5.596–602)

Ascanius was the first to revive this equestrian custom, these competitions, when he surrounded Alba Longa with its walls, and he taught the old-time Latin people to perform it, just as he had when a boy, and the Trojan youth with him; the Alban people taught their descendants; from this source later still the greatest city, Rome, took it on and preserved the ancestral rite; Troy now is the boys, and ‘Trojan’ the name given to the procession.

Here Virgil’s narrative looks forward to the institution of this youthful spectacle in Rome via Ascanius’ revival of it at Alba Longa,² forging a strong link between the text’s present and the

² On the *lusus Troiae* in late republican and early imperial Rome, see Glei 1997: 305–9; Herrmann 1939; Severy 2003: 83–4, 162, 178; Weinstock 1971: 88–90. Although the games were claimed to be a relic of the Romans’ Trojan past, they were probably an Italian or Etruscan tradition. They were first ‘revived’ by Sulla, when Cato the Younger was one of the boy leaders of the troop (Plutarch, *Cato the Younger* 3). They became increasingly popular: there was a performance in Virgil’s youth at Caesar’s triumphal

Roman future.³ Continuity is, thus, very strongly marked and the game of Troy, like Ascanius himself at the moment he acquires the name Iulus, is symbolic of the links between the heroic past in which Aeneas moved and the Augustan present in which the *Aeneid* was written. Moreover, as with Ascanius' naming scene, where the name Ilus looks back to the foundations of Troy, the temporal associations of the *lusus Troiae* extend backwards as well as forwards, and the boys performing in the games remind the watching Trojans of their ancestors:

excipiunt plausu pavidos gaudentque tuentes
Dardanidae veterumque agnoscunt ora parentum. (*Aeneid* 5.575–6)

They greet the nervous performers with applause and the watching
Trojans rejoice, as they recognise the faces of their long-ago forefathers.

The analogous functions of Ascanius and the *lusus Troiae* are highlighted by Virgil's discussion of the names of the other young men involved, which imply the same connection between the Trojan past and Roman future that Ascanius' change of *cognomen* from Ilus to Iulus had done in Book One. The generational continuity implied by the Trojans' recognition of ancestral features in the young riders is stressed by emphasis on how their names also provide a dual connection backwards to Troy and forwards to Rome:⁴

una acies iuvenum, ducit quam parvus ovantem
nomen avi referens Priamus, tua clara, Polite,
progenies, auctura Italos; ...
alter Atys, genus unde Atii duxere Latini,
parvus Atys pueroque puer dilectus Iulo. (*Aeneid* 5.563–5, 568–9)

There was one line of young riders, which little Priam led in triumph,
his name harking back to his grandfather, he was your famous offspring,
Polites, and destined to bring forth a wealth of Italian sons; ... Another

celebrations in 46 BCE and another to honour the deified Caesar in 29 BCE, where Tiberius led the older boys; one in 13 BCE to dedicate the theatre of Marcellus, in which Gaius Caesar participated; and another in 2 BCE to mark the dedication of the temple of Mars Ultor in Augustus' new forum, in which Agrippa Postumus took part. Augustus later suspended performances because of an accident (Suetonius, *Aug.* 43.2); they were revived again by his successors.

³ Temporal markers and repetitions underline the unbroken succession of the tradition: *primus* Ascanius ... *docuit*; *Albani docuere*; *hinc* ... *porro* / *accepit Roma*; *nunc*.

⁴ Powell 2008: 113–14 notes in particular the connection to Augustus forged by the inclusion of Atys, founder of the Atii, the family of the emperor's mother.

troop was led by Atys, from whom the Latin Atii trace their descent, little Atys, a boy beloved by the child Ascanius.

Both *parvus Priamus* and *parvus Atys* are here seen as links in a generational chain that stretches from the heroes of the Trojan cycle to the Romans, who claimed them as ancestors.⁵ Importantly, these young Trojans are marked as the progenitors of Italian and Latin families,⁶ as well as being of noble Trojan stock: they, like Ascanius (who is also Iulus) connect Troy to Italy, and act as emblems of Rome's mixed heritage. Recognition, an important theme in this section of the *Aeneid*, is strongly marked, as the Trojans joyfully perceive their ancestors among the riders (*gaudentque ... agnoscunt*, 575–6) and we are told that the lineage of little Priamus is patent (*clara*, 564).

The Trojans' joyful reaction, and the apparently uncomplicated and inexorable sweep of generations and of custom from Troy to Roman Italy, might incline us to note the *lusus Troiae* approvingly, as a marker of initiation into adulthood for the young Trojans involved and further encourage an instinct to press on with the narrative.⁷ Closer scrutiny of the *lusus Troiae* gives pause, however. The Trojans' recognition (*agnoscunt*, 576) of ancestral features in the faces of the young performers echoes moments of recognition in Carthage and Buthrotum, where Helenus, unlike Andromache, recognised Aeneas (*agnoscitque suos*, *Aen.* 3.347), just as Aeneas recognised himself in the temple scenes at Carthage (*se quoque principibus permixtum agnovit Achivis*, *Aen.* 1.488), and recognised Andromache's sham Troy for what it was in Book Three (*parvam Troiam simulataque magnis / Pergama et arentem Xanthi cognomine rivum / agnosco*, 349–51).⁸ Indeed, continual repetition of *agnoscere* throughout the Trojans' journeys, and Book Three in particular, highlights the importance of

⁵ Priamus, as Gowers 2011: 112–13 argues, is also a symbol of generational discontinuity: though he bears the name of King Priam, his grandfather, he does not inherit leadership of the Trojans or a kingly role.

⁶ Priamus is described as *auctura Italos* (565): while Atys gives his name to the Atii, as Iulus did to the Iulii: *genus unde Atii duxere Latini* (568). On the importance of genealogies in the *Aeneid*, see Hannah 2004; and on the *Aeneid*'s representation of generational time, see Bettini 1991: 142–50, 289–91.

⁷ On the *lusus Troiae* and initiation, see further below, p. 147.

⁸ See also Dido: *agnosco veteris vestigia flammae* (*Aen.* 4.23).

understanding and acceptance for the unfolding of the Trojans' fate. Aeneas has to recognise the Penates (*agnoscere*, 173) and Anchises to recognise the truth of their message (*agnovit*, 180) for the Trojans to realise at last that Italy is their destiny. Kind hosts like Helenus and Anius, who earlier recognised Anchises (*veterem Anchisen agnovit amicum*, 82), ensure that the Trojans find help and safe harbour on their journey. The repetition of the verb in Book Five establishes the Trojan boys as signs too, particularly perhaps Ascanius, the last and most outstanding of them (*extremus formaque ante omnis pulcher*, 570). The Trojan men who view them are, like Dido and Andromache, readers of destiny as manifest in these young Trojan riders.

Such comparison is further encouraged by the way in which Virgil describes the young Trojans leading the troops of the *lusus Troiae*. Both *parvus Priamus* and *parvus Atys* remind us of Andromache's *parva Troia* and of Dido's *parvulus Aeneas* from Books Three and Four.⁹ Ascanius, carried on a horse given to him by Dido as a memorial and pledge of her love (*monumentum et pignus amoris*, 572), recalls not only the Carthaginian queen but also Andromache, who gave him gifts as *monumenta* in Book Three. Both Dido and Andromache thus make ghostly appearances during the *lusus Troiae*. The implicit presence of these dissenters from the Trojan cause reminds us that the question of how we identify Ascanius, and thus how we perceive the ultimate end of Virgil's Augustan narrative, is not as certain as it might seem. The male Trojans' approving recognition of Ascanius and his troop in the *lusus Troiae* holds out the tantalising comfort of sharing in their mass approval, joining them as they are socialised by spectatorship of Anchises' games,¹⁰ without having to worry about other points of view. At the same time, the shades of Dido and Andromache do not allow us to forget that the Trojans' Roman future is still debatable, still undecided and still under threat. The

⁹ Aeneas, calling the Trojan survivors the *altera Troiae* / *Pergama* when sacrificing to Apollo on Delos in Book Three (86–7), prepares us for making comparisons between the little boys and Andromache's little city.

¹⁰ Feldherr 1995 has convincingly argued that 'Virgil represents the act of watching the games as a socializing process which transforms the spectators much as the audience at an actual spectacle were made to perceive their place in the larger order of the state' (247).

motions of the *lusus Troiae* itself, compared to the deceptive interwoven path of a Cretan labyrinth, lend further ambiguity to a performance that at first sight looked unambiguous.¹¹

It is noteworthy, too, that the final line of the description of the Augustan revival of the *lusus Troiae* brings the strongest opponent of the Trojans' Roman future, Juno, very strongly to mind. Virgil makes an apparently benign statement: the boys who perform the ritual represent Troy itself, and their troops are called 'Trojan' (*Troiaque nunc pueri, Troianum dicitur agmen*, 602).¹² The establishment of this tradition in Rome ensures the survival of the Trojan name, which in the context of Book Five and its Romanisation of the Trojans at Anchises' funeral games looks praiseworthy, but which is in direct contravention of Juno's expressed desire in Book Twelve, to which Jupiter apparently acquiesced, that Troy's name should die out with the city itself (823–8).¹³ Repetition of the words 'Troy' and 'Trojan' in a single line (*Troia ... Troianum*, 602) closely echoes the goddess's obsession with the name of Troy and the twofold use of adjectives meaning 'Trojan' in the climax of her speech (*neu Troas fieri iubeas Teucrosque vocari*, *Aen.* 12.824), and underlines the contradiction. We might think that Troy's survival in inherited ritual (*hunc morem*, 596) represents the custom and sacred rites that Jupiter says he will add to the intermingled Trojan and Latin peoples (*morem ritusque sacrorum / adiciam*, *Aen.* 12.836–7).¹⁴ Nonetheless, the survival of something so specifically Trojan, and something specifically called Trojan, is remarkable, and most remarkable of all is the statement that, in the age of Augustus, it is Roman boys who are Troy (*Troiaque nunc pueri*, 602).¹⁵

¹¹ The boys' performances are *simulacra* (585), marked by deceit (*dolum*, 590) and error (*error*, 591) and in that way strongly reminiscent of Andromache's little Troy, discussed above, pp. 59–61. Further on the imagery of the labyrinth in the *Aeneid*, see Armstrong 2002 and P. A. Miller 1995.

¹² O'Hara 1996: 163 notes that 'the reference to naming works as a signpost for an etymological aetiology' and that it thus draws attention to the passage.

¹³ See above, pp. 37–8.

¹⁴ On the ambiguity of Jupiter's promise, see Lyne 1987: 81–3. We might also note that the absence of an expressed indirect object of *adiciam* makes the statement even more opaque. It is left unclear on which race (or is it both?) the customs are to be imposed. For the Trojan diaspora and Roman cultural identity in the *Aeneid*, see Barchiesi 2006.

¹⁵ Conington 1884, *ad loc.* does not find the statement extraordinary: "'Troia" was the name of the game ... and there is nothing peculiarly harsh or un-Virgilian in identifying it with the players.'

We have heard the claim that the Trojan people represent Troy before, in Aeneas' appeal in Book Three to Apollo at Delphi to preserve his band of refugees, a second citadel of the lost city (*serva altera Troiae / Pergama*, 86–7). In the [previous chapter](#), this identification of the citadel as embodied in its people was contrasted to Andromache and Helenus' attempts to fashion a physical replica of the Trojan landscape and its buildings at Buthrotum, as a sign of Aeneas' rejection of barren reduplication during his journey towards recognition that Troy's survival required more than simple replication of inanimate objects.¹⁶ The claim that a city is its citizens and not the buildings is a not uncommon trope in ancient Greek literature, and when Aeneas claims that Troy is embodied in its surviving people he sounds very much like an Athenian politician and general. We can compare him, for example, to Nicias, who exhorts the downcast Athenian army with a rousing speech that concludes with the claim that 'the men are the polis, not city walls or an unmanned fleet'.¹⁷ Claims of autochthony complicate such rhetoric, but it is in Rome that such statements become truly controversial: Roman generals do not make such statements because, as the literature of the late republic and early empire stresses repeatedly, Rome is a city which cannot be moved, just as Troy is a city which should not be rebuilt. Only individuals being depicted as wrongheaded suggest that Rome's identity is not tied up in its buildings, particularly its religious buildings, and its location.¹⁸ Cicero makes

¹⁶ See above, pp. 60–1.

¹⁷ ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλις, καὶ οὐ τεῖχη οὐδὲ νῆες ἀνδρῶν κεναί (Thucydides 7.77.7). Similar equations are implied at Thucydides 7.64 and Herodotus 8.62, where the suggestion is made that Athens be moved to Italy, and compare also Alcaeus fr. 112.10. I am grateful to Polly Low and Richard Rawles for these references.

¹⁸ Velleius Paterculus, for example, says that Brutus and Cassius requisitioned provinces and legions 'giving the pretext that, wherever they themselves were, was the *res publica*' (*ubicumque ipsi essent, praetextentes esse rem publicam*, 2.62.3). Woodman 1983, whose text I use here, suggests that 'this was ... Livy's view also' (135). Camillus argues against the proposal of the tribunes of the plebs to leave Rome in Livy 5.51–4, suggesting that abandoning Rome would be to bring greater desolation than the recent attack by the Gauls (51.3) and stressing the importance of its location to Rome's god-given success (54.4). Proposals to leave Rome after Cannae are a sign of the enormity of the recent defeat (22.53.5), and Horace, *Epodes* 16, which advocates fleeing Rome for the Islands of the Blessed after years of civil disturbance and strife, can be read in a similar vein (see further Watson 2003: 485). Further on suggestions in Livy to move the

the contrast between Greek and Roman ideas about the city clear when discussing Pompey's departure from Rome in 49 BCE:¹⁹

hoc quaero, quid urbem reliquerit; ego enim ἀπορῶ. tum nihil absurdus. urbem tu relinquis? ergo idem, si Galli venirent. 'non est' inquit 'in parietibus res publica.' at in aris et focus. 'fecit Themistocles.' ... nostri olim urbe relinqua capta arcem tamen retinuerunt. (Cicero, *ad Att.* 7.11.3)

I ask you this: why might he have left Rome? For I am at a loss. Nothing seemed more irrational at the time. Would you leave the city? Would you do the same thing, then, if the Gauls were coming? He says: 'The republic does not lie in city walls.' But it is in the altars and the hearths. 'Themistocles did it,' he responds. ... Long ago our ancestors still held the citadel even when the rest of the city had been taken.

Leaving Rome, or moving Rome, is repeatedly cast as an abandonment of Roman identity,²⁰ an impious act. And intimately interconnected with that idea is the belief that the rebuilding of Troy, whether or not this rebuilding was associated with the relocation of the capital of the empire to the East, would be equally disastrous.²¹

What, then, does it mean when Virgil says that Roman boys embody Troy and are called Trojan? Juno's stipulation that the name of Troy should die out with the city is flagrantly ignored, while young Romans are identified in what seems a very unRoman way with a city, and not even their own city but with the one city of all that Roman literature repeatedly stresses cannot and should not be rebuilt. Commentators explain the odd formulation 'Troy now [is] the boys' (*Troiaque nunc pueri*, 602), where *Troia* and *pueri* are subject and predicate of an unexpressed copulative verb, as a roundabout way of referring to the fact that 'Troy' is a name sometimes given to the *lusus Troiae*.²² However, the evocation of

capital, see Kraus 1994: 280–2. On the identification of Rome with its topography in Livy, see Jaeger 1997: 57–93; and in Cicero, Vasaly 1993: 40–87.

¹⁹ Shackleton-Bailey 1987.

²⁰ As Livy's Camillus puts it, if the inhabitants of other Italian towns moved into a Rome deserted by the Romans, 'they would become Romans' (*illos Romanos ... esse*, 5.53.7).

²¹ The rebuilding of Troy is discussed in Horace, *Odes* 3.3, where Juno promises that it would lead to yet another disaster (61–2). For reports of alleged proposals by Caesar and others to create a new centre of empire in the East, see Nisbet and Rudd 2004: 36–8.

²² See Conington above, n. 15. So also Servius, *ad Aen.* 5.602: *ut ait Suetonius Tranquillus, lusus ipse, quem vulgo pyrricham appellant, Troia vocatur* ('as Suetonius says, the

Juno and the likely currency, even at the relatively stable time at which Virgil wrote, of questions about the relationship of Roman identity to the city and the wisdom of rebuilding Troy suggest that more is going on.²³ As Aeneas told Dido in Book Two, Troy would still stand (*Troiaque nunc staret*, 56) if fate and the gods had not dictated otherwise. Repetition of *Troiaque nunc* by the narrator in Book Five suggests that Troy's survival is the issue. Embodied by young boys in the performance of a custom appropriated by Rome, and made Roman by virtue of its location in the greatest city (*maxima ... / accepit Roma*, 600–1),²⁴ the *lusus Troiae* in the *Aeneid* is a remarkable instance of the transmutation of city into custom, and of Trojan civic identity into the performing bodies of young Roman citizens.

Virgil's contribution to the debate about Troy's revival in the age of Augustus has gone virtually unremarked. We should, however, be keenly aware that the performers of the *lusus Troiae* themselves represent the survival of Troy, and represent also the particular susceptibility to symbolic appropriation of the young, who are able to stand for a foreign city in Rome itself, though the identity of Rome's adult citizens rests on other criteria. Troy can, in this way, be endlessly revived, through countless generations, if only in the moment of performance of ritual: rather than Rome's capital moving East, the East is encompassed, and repeatedly recreated, in Rome itself. Trojanness is thus made part of being Roman, and pointedly associated both with being a child and with the potential of childhood.²⁵ The *lusus Troiae*, too, is marked as an event which might well draw the ire of Juno, which – as we soon discover – is about to erupt.

game, which people commonly call "Pyrrhic", is called "Troy"). Cf. also Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 39.2.7, *Tiberius* 6.4.5, *Nero* 7.1.2.

²³ Nisbet and Rudd 2004: 'as Livy was writing around the same time as Horace, it is tempting to look for a contemporary context in both passages and also in Virg. *Aen.* 12.827f.' (37).

²⁴ The boundlessness of Roman space is suggested here, as in Jupiter's prophecy in Book One (278–9).

²⁵ On these issues, see further below, pp. 160–7. Ovid makes a similar point about the transferral of Troy to Italy when he says that 'Aeneas carried Troy into Italian fields' (*Troiam Aeneas Italos portaret in agros*, *Fasti* 4.251). Fantham 1998 suggests *ad loc.* that 'Ovid has adopted the identification of Troy with her gods made by Virgil at *Aen.* 1.68.'

Trojan Women

Our awareness of the continued potential for dissent from the normative vision of the Trojan future offered by Jupiter in Book One and reflected in the *lusus Troiae* soon finds confirmation:

hac celebrata tenus sancto certamina patri.
hinc primum Fortuna fidem mutata novavit. (*Aeneid* 5.603–4)

The games for Aeneas' blessed father had been celebrated up to this point. At this moment fortune first changed and renewed her old 'reliability'.

This comment marks whatever is about to happen as a significant danger to the Trojan quest, a first (*primum*, 604) blow after the relative calm of the funeral games,²⁶ and a new beginning in their story,²⁷ as well as a return (*novavit*, 604) to troubles already experienced. They had previously faced much ill fortune:²⁸ the fall of Troy; their traumatic escape; terrible storms; their numerous abortive attempts at foundation; a ghostly inferior Troy in Buthrotum; the nearly fatal sojourn at Carthage. What is to come is marked as another extraordinary threat, and again Ascanius is at the heart of it. Even as the games were being celebrated Juno sent Iris to foment discord among the Trojan women (605–8).²⁹ Exhausted and longing for a home, the women sit apart on the beach and mourn Anchises as the men celebrate his funeral.³⁰ In the guise of the elderly Beroe,

²⁶ R. D. Williams 1960, *ad loc.*: '*primum* presumably means for the first time in Sicily'.

²⁷ Conington 1884, *ad Aen.* 5.603 notes its similarity to the last line of the *Iliad*: 'thus they performed the funeral rites of Hector, tamer of horses' (ὥς οἱ γ' ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἑκτορος ἱπποδάμοιο, *Iliad* 24.804). The *lusus Troiae* are thus marked as a closural event, while the episode with the Trojan women moves the narrative from familiar epic territory into new arenas.

²⁸ As noted by Venus in Book One: *nunc eadem fortuna viros tot casibus actos / insequitur*, 240–1. The 'renewed' fortune in Book Five strongly evokes this 'same old fortune' that dogged the Trojans since before the beginning of the text.

²⁹ The description of Juno, 'her old-time grief not yet sated' (*necdum antiquum saturata dolorem*, 608), recalls the first mention of the vengeful goddess in the opening lines of Virgil's narrative where her anger is 'unforgetting' (*memorem*, *Aen.* 1.4), as is she (*memor*, *Aen.* 1.23). Recollection of her long persecution of the Trojans and of the storm she incited Aeolus to send against them in Book One heightens appreciation of the suffering that weighs upon the unhappy women of Troy in Book Five.

³⁰ On women as the 'other', and a threat to the plot in the *Aeneid*, see Nugent 1999; Oliensis 1997.

Iris urges them to push for the recreation of Troy in Sicily, ensuring this long-desired settlement by burning the Trojans' ships:

'hic Erycis fines fraterni atque hospes Acestes:
 quis prohibet muros iacere et dare civibus urbem?
 o patria et rapti nequiquam ex hoste penates,
 nullane iam Troiae dicentur moenia? nusquam
 Hectoreos amnis, Xanthum et Simoenta, videbo?
 quin agite et mecum infaustas exurite puppis.
 nam mihi Cassandrae per somnum vatis imago
 ardentis dare visa faces: 'hic quaerite Troiam,
 hic domus est' inquit 'vobis.' iam tempus agi res,
 nec tantis mora prodigiis. en quattuor arae
 Neptuno: deus ipse faces animumque ministrat.' (*Aeneid* 5.630–40)

'Here is the territory of brother Eryx and our host Acestes: who is stopping us from laying walls and giving the citizens a city? O my fatherland, and Penates snatched in vain from the enemy, will no city walls even now be called the walls of Troy? Will I not see anywhere Hector's rivers, the Xanthus and the Simois? No: get going and help me burn these accursed ships. For a vision of the prophetess Cassandra appeared to me in a dream and gave me burning firebrands: "Here seek Troy, this is home for you all," she said. It is time already now for action to be taken, not for delay in following such great signs. Look: four altars to Neptune – the god himself supplies torches and the will to use them.'

Iris' imagined Troy is a reflection of Andromache's barren *parva Troia* in Book Three, a detailed recreation of the lost city and its surrounding terrain, and called by the same name (*Troiae dicentur moenia*, 633). However, her language is seductively similar to that used elsewhere by those following the path laid down by Jupiter. Her claim to have heard the desired 'this is home' (*hic domus est*, 638) from Cassandra in a dream is later echoed in Aeneas' recognition of the Trojans' true homeland in Latium 'this is home, this is the fatherland' (*hic domus, haec patria est*, *Aen.* 7.122), and the wish for walls (*muros*, 631), and a city for citizens (*civibus urbem*, 631), present action (*iam tempus agi res*, 638) and no delay (*nec ... mora*, 639) are all familiar from elsewhere in Aeneas' quest.

Iris' emotive argument leaves the women stunned and at a loss, and despite the warning of Pyrgo, who correctly identifies

the impassioned speaker as a goddess (646–52), they remain torn (*ambiguae*, 655) between their unhappy desire to remain in Sicily and the promise of future empire, hovering between the two opposing positions held by Andromache and the spectators of Anchises' funeral games. Finally, Iris' flying departure provides a striking supernatural sign and persuades them to set fire to the Trojan fleet, impiously snatching burning brands from the altars to do so:

tum vero attonitae monstris actaeque furore
conclamant rapiuntque focis penetralibus ignem,
pars spoliant aras, frondem ac virgulta facesque
conciunt. furit immissis Volcanus habenis
transtra per et remos et pictas abiete puppis. (*Aeneid* 5.659–63)

Then indeed, stunned by the portents and driven by frenzy they all cry out, and snatch fire from the depths of the hearths, some despoil the altars and throw foliage and brush and torches all together. The fire rages, all restraint cast off, through the rowers' benches and the oars and the sterns painted with pitch.

Here, the Trojan women have gone far beyond even Andromache's rejection of Aeneas' and Ascanius' destined future. In burning the ships they are like Dido, who wishes she had done so (*faces in castra tulissem / implessemque foros flammis*, *Aen.* 4.604–5), and later like Turnus, who uses the same strategy in Book Nine (69–76). Struck dumb (*attonitae*, 659) by the *monstrum* of Iris' departure, they are like Amata and the Italian women who resist alliance with the Trojans (*attonitae Baccho*, *Aen.* 7.580). Driven by *furor*, they are like Juno, who is described as *acta furore gravi* (*Aen.* 10.63), after hearing Venus' plea that, rather than continuing to fight in Latium, her Trojans should be allowed to go back to the unhappy ruins of Troy (*Xanthum et Simoenta / redde, oro, miseris iterumque revolvere casus / da, pater, Iliacos Teucris*, *Aen.* 10.60–2). Iris' astonishing departure has converted the sorrowing Trojan women into *simulacra* of the bitterest enemies of Troy's destiny. It has thus created a situation where the women's renewed recognition of their destiny is imperative if the Trojan mission is not to be destroyed completely by the burning of their ships.

News of the conflagration soon arrives at the theatre where Anchises' funeral games are being celebrated. Ascanius is the first to reach the ships, and tries to bring the Trojan women to their senses:³¹

primus et Ascanius, cursus ut laetus equestris
ducebat, sic acer equo turbata petivit
castra, nec exanimis possunt retinere magistri.
'quis furor iste novus? quo nunc, quo tenditis' inquit,
'heu, miserae cives? non hostem inimicaque castra
Argivum, vestras spes uritis. en, ego vester
Ascanius!' galeam ante pedes proiecit inanem,
qua ludo indutus belli simulacra ciebat. (*Aeneid* 5.667–74)

First on the scene was Ascanius: he was happily leading the equestrian parade and in just the same way he fiercely made for the disturbed camp on horseback, and his minders were dismayed and could not hold him back. 'What is this strange frenzy? Where are you headed now, alas, unhappy citizens? This is not the enemy and hostile camps of Greeks that you are attacking: you are burning your own hopes! Look, it is I, your Ascanius!' And he cast down before their feet his empty helmet, which he had worn in the game when he was going through the motions of a semblance of war.

Ascanius' dramatic speech attempts to win the maddened women back to proper recognition of their part in the Trojans' journey to Rome by drawing on themes we have seen already in his appearance in the funeral games, hinting again at the complex ties binding the prince to the heroic past and to the Augustan present. By reminding the women that they are no longer besieged by the Greeks, and pointing out that the ships that they are burning are their own, he invokes the Trojans' Homeric past, while his admonition also looks to the Roman future, by referring to the hopes being burnt in the flames engulfing the ships (*vestras spes uritis*, 672). By calling the women *cives*, he casts them as partners in his family's Roman quest, and his opening exclamations, *quis furor iste novus? quo nunc, quo tenditis?* (670), place his speech in a tradition of addresses made to dangerously rebellious citizens. His *quo tenditis?* is echoed, for example, by his father's *quo ruitis?* (*Aen.* 12.313), the question asked as Aeneas tries to save the fragile truce achieved in Book

³¹ Highet 1972 offers a summary: 'The vehement questions of Ascanius and his rebuke are equivalent to a command, "Stop!"' (307, n. 6).

Twelve by suggesting that his army's rebelliousness is tantamount to civil war.³²

The most important persuasion in Ascanius' speech, however, is himself. Exclaiming *en, ego vester / Ascanius!* (672–3), he throws the helmet he had been wearing in the *lusus Troiae* down on the ground. Both his self-revelation and his action demand recognition. Handsome young epic warriors without their helmets draw all eyes towards them;³³ heroes like Hector and Aeneas remove their helmets when it is important that they be properly recognised;³⁴ Roman generals do the same. The power of this self-revelation is exemplified in an account of Caesar's wars in Africa, where a commander, Labienus, removes his helmet to lend weight to a scathing harangue, and a soldier replies to Labienus' bare-headed intimidation by taking his own helmet off, demanding the general's recognition in turn of him and of his mettle:³⁵

Labienus in equo capite nudo versari in prima acie, simul suos cohortari, nonnumquam legionarios Caesaris ita appellare ... tum ait miles: 'iam me quis sim intelleges', simul cassidem de capite deiecit ut cognosci ab eo posset. ([Caesar], *Bellum Africum* 16.1–3)

On horseback and at the forefront of the battle line Labienus was wheeling with bare head, and at the same time encouraging his men, and several times he addressed Caesar's legions in this way ... Then a soldier said: 'Now you will know who I am,' and at the same time he cast his helmet from his head so he could be recognised by the general.

By discarding his helmet, Ascanius draws dramatic attention to himself – and particularly his face – demanding acknowledgment of who he is,³⁶ and what he stands for. He asks, in fact, that the women appropriate him and Jupiter's Roman future together, and

³² Aeneas speaks of civic themes (311–17), such as *discordia*, *leges*, *ius* and *foedera*, and echoes Horace's question to Roman citizens hastening towards self-destruction: *quo, quo scelesti ruitis?* (*Epodes* 7.1).

³³ E.g. Parthenopaeus in Statius, *Thebaid* 9.699–703.

³⁴ Aeneas does so in Book Twelve when trying to stop the discord that threatens to break the truce, *at pius Aeneas dextram tendebat inermem / nudato capite atque suos clamore vocabat* (311–12). Hector removes his helmet to assure the frightened young Astyanax of his identity when he makes his farewells to his family before going out to fight his final battle (*Iliad* 6.466–75).

³⁵ Klotz 1966.

³⁶ And perhaps also whose son he is, if he bears a family resemblance to Aeneas.

thus see him properly, in contrast to the female characters of earlier books, who either failed to understand his symbolic role or attempted to twist it towards their own desired ends.

Ascanius' emphatically demonstrative *en ego* underlines his message, both stressing and revealing its speaker's presence and true nature. The phrase is used in a similar way later, when Allecto discards her elderly disguise and reveals her true appearance to Turnus at the climax of her attempt to force him to war against the Trojans:³⁷

'en ego victa situ, quam veri effeta senectus
arma inter regum falsa formidine ludit.
respice ad haec: adsum dirarum ab sede sororum,
bella manu letumque gero.' (*Aeneid* 7.452–5)

'Behold, it is I, ground down by the idleness of age, whom senility,
purged of truth, makes mockery of amongst the battles of kings with false
forebodings. Look again at all this: I am here from the dwelling place of
the dread sisters, I bear war and death in my hand.'

Here, in a moment of revelation, followed by Turnus' infection with *furor*, Allecto shapes the Italian hero's destiny and forges the future of Rome. In Book Five, Ascanius' similarly powerful grab for attention shows him attempting to dispel madness from the Trojan women and prevent a disastrous, dead-end detour from the Trojans' path towards the future, revealing the truth about what they are doing by revealing himself.

Awareness of the close interrelationship between recognising Ascanius and acknowledging the Roman future sheds further light on what he says in his speech. When he claims that the women are burning their own hopes as they burn the ships (*vestras spes uritis*, 672), we hear a persistent echo of all the times that Ascanius is spoken of as the *spes* of his father and his people. Indeed, the first human character to mention the young prince in the *Aeneid*,

³⁷ Other speakers who use *en ego* in moments of self-revelation and persuasion include: Torquatus drawing attention to his service and credentials when addressing an enraged Senate (Silius Italicus, *Punica* 11.85–7); Publius Valerius exhorting a crowd to courage before making himself an example of bravery by drawing his sword to fight the coming enemy (Livy 3.17.6); and the ghost of Remus, drawing attention to himself and to his pathetically bloody state to reveal a truth about Roman identity (Ovid, *Fasti* 5.457–60). On Remus' ghost, see further Barchiesi 1997: 120–3.

Ilioneus asking for Dido's mercy in Carthage, suggests that Ascanius and his people's hopes are intimately interconnected:³⁸

'sin absumpta salus et te, pater optime Teucrum,
pontus habet Libyae nec spes iam restat Iuli,
at freta Sicaniae saltem sedesque paratas,
unde huc advecti, regemque petamus Acesten.' (*Aeneid* 1.555–8)

'But if hope of salvation has been eradicated, and the African sea has taken you – most excellent father of the Trojans – and no hope now can be held out for Ascanius, then rather let us at least seek the straits of Sicily, the resting place made ready, the same place from which we were carried here, and the king Acestes.'

Ilioneus' *spes ... Iuli* is echoed by Mercury when urging Aeneas to leave Carthage for his son's sake and his Roman future,³⁹ if for nothing else:⁴⁰

'si te nulla movet tantarum gloria rerum,
Ascanium surgentem et spes heredis Iuli
respice, cui regnum Italiae Romanaque tellus
debetur.' (*Aeneid* 4.272, 274–6)

'If the glory of such great prospects does not move you at all, then look to growing Ascanius and the hopes of your heir Iulus, to whom the kingdom of Italy and the Roman land is owed.'

Later, Ascanius is called the second hope of Rome's greatness when he appears with his father to make a truce with Latinus in the last book of the epic (*magnae spes altera Romae*, *Aen.* 12.168). The many hopes invested in Ascanius clearly include the Trojans' hopes for the Roman future that they have been promised.⁴¹ Equally, proper recognition of Ascanius must involve an acknowledgement and an adoption of those hopes, for the Trojan women in Book Five as for Aeneas in Carthage. When Ascanius says to the Trojan

³⁸ Uncertainty as to whether *spes Iuli* here refers to hopes that Ascanius is alive or the hopes that Ascanius represents for his people's future further blurs the boundaries between Ascanius and *spes*.

³⁹ The young prince, Aeneas' only son (so far), is also Aeneas' hope, and the hero is called on to act in the name of the hopes he cherishes for his son by human characters too: Palinurus in the underworld asking for passage across the Styx (*Aen.* 6.362–5), and the Italian warrior Magus begging Aeneas to spare his life (*Aen.* 10.522–5). On Aeneas' departure from Carthage, see further Skulsky 1985.

⁴⁰ Line 273, almost identical to *Aen.* 4.233, is omitted in most manuscripts.

⁴¹ See above, pp. 22–5.

women that they are burning their hopes (*vestras spes uritis*, 672), and immediately follows this by revealing himself to be recognised as their Ascanius (*en ego, vester / Ascanius*, 672–3), he accuses them not only of rejecting, and of destroying, the Trojans' divinely ordained destiny, but also of rejecting, even of destroying, him.

Such an emotionally charged argument might lead us to expect that the Trojan women, trained to view Ascanius as a cherished symbol of their hope for the future, would be won over by the young prince's speech. But we cannot be sure. Aeneas and his battle line of Trojans hasten to the scene as Ascanius is speaking, and the women flee across the shore and to the woods, in fear and shame:

accelerat simul Aeneas, simul agmina Teucrum.
ast illae diversa metu per litora passim
diffugiunt silvasque et sicubi concava furtim
saxa petunt; piget incepti lucisque, suosque
mutatae agnoscunt, excussaue pectore Iuno est. (*Aeneid* 5.675–9)

Aeneas sped up at the same time, and a battle line of Trojans too. But the women scattered in flight here and there throughout different parts of the shore, driven by fear, and they made for the woods and any hollow rocks anywhere in their stealth, and are ashamed of what they had attempted and to be seen in the light, and they are transformed and recognise their own people: Juno is cast out of their hearts.

The women recognise their kinsmen (*suosque / mutatae agnoscunt*, 678–9), just as Helenus recognised his Trojan relations in Book Three, and Juno is expelled. But there is some ambiguity as to what, exactly, inspires the women's shamed recognition and renewed sanity. Since their reaction and Ascanius' emotional speech are separated by the arrival of Aeneas and his men, we cannot be certain that his self-revelation did induce them to recognise him, and their ownership of him that it implies, and then acknowledge the harm they were doing to the Trojans' Roman destiny. Our doubts about the effect of Ascanius' speech are only increased when the young prince is upstaged by his father, who intervenes with a prayer to Jupiter to put out the flames still raging through the fleet (685–99).⁴²

⁴² Laird 1999 argues that Ascanius' failure to save the ships indicates his subordination to his heroic father (192–6). Compare Otis 1964: 'The initial reaction of Ascanius ... is an almost comical exhibition of precocious *pietas* ... He attempts in his immaturity to act like his father but his father belies the imitation' (277).

Thus, at the end of this episode, Ascanius' readers are left uncertain about whether his identity, maturity and position were properly recognised by the Trojan women, or indeed are clearly recognisable. Though we may have hoped for a resolution, in which the Trojan women learnt to abandon the outlook of Andromache and Dido, to join the Trojan men in joyful acceptance of their mission and the image of the future that Ascanius reflects, no such neat solution is forthcoming. We cannot be entirely sure whether the Trojan men have recognised Ascanius properly either – in order to reveal himself to the Trojan women, we are told, he throws off the empty helmet (*galeam ... inanem*, 673) that he had worn in the mock battles (*belli simulacra*, 674) of the *lusus Troiae*. The adjective *inanis* has been the focus of much discussion among commentators, and several translations have been offered: 'empty', because his head isn't in it anymore, and 'useless', because it is only decorative and not meant to ward off any real attack, are the most popular interpretations.⁴³ However, to a reader who has been tracing the associations of Virgil's Ascanius with recognition and delusion from Buthrotum to Carthage, and then on to Sicily, the adjective, in common with the description of the *lusus Troiae* as *simulacra*, cannot help but recall the deceptive *imagines* of Andromache's *parva Troia* and Dido's Carthage. Some shadow of doubt is thus cast on the question of whether any of the human characters at this stage in the *Aeneid* recognize the future Ascanius symbolizes: he is a symbol, certainly, but the narrative shows us that he is a malleable and at times opaque one. His interactions with others underscore this uncertainty: Andromache and Dido tried to appropriate him, but failed; the Trojan woman and perhaps also the Trojan men may also have failed, through an imperfect vision or appreciation of the future he represents.

It is not entirely clear, therefore, that Ascanius has been recognised either during the *lusus Troiae* or its aftermath and concern that he might still be vulnerable in Sicily to the sorts of threats we saw in Carthage and Buthrotum is not alleviated by the removal of his helmet. Appearance without a helmet not only allows and

⁴³ See R. D. Williams 1960, *ad loc.* for a full discussion. The helmet is also deceptive, as Oliensis 2009: 69 points out, because the earlier description of the *lusus Troiae* suggested that the boys were wearing garlands (556): 'The helmet is introduced, it seems, just so that it can be removed.'

enforces recognition but also leaves a warrior vulnerable to attack. When the helmetless and weaponless Aeneas appeals to his army to desist from fighting in Book Twelve, for example, he is struck down by an arrow from an unknown source and is forced to withdraw while Turnus wreaks havoc on the battlefield (311–23).⁴⁴ So, in Book Five, the helmetless Ascanius grabs at the attention of the maddened Trojan women but is also at risk and unprotected in his confrontation with them.

This risk is more significant than it might first appear. The Trojan women are characterised in Book Five as frenzied, illogical in men's eyes, and thus a threat to the security and future of Rome.⁴⁵ They run off into the woods and the caves along the sea shore even as they return to their right minds. They are reminiscent, as we have seen, of Dido,⁴⁶ of the maddened Turnus, of Amata and the Italian women raging like Bacchantes in the woods, even of Juno in her extreme hatred of the Trojans. They are reminiscent too of the torch-bearing mother of Orestes, mentioned in connection to Dido's haunting by Aeneas' ghost in Book Four (472–3). Moreover, the results of their fiery madness are first seen from the seats of the theatre (*cuneosque theatri*, 664), where Aeneas and the Trojan men are celebrating Anchises' funeral games with a series of spectacles.⁴⁷ This perspective blurs the boundaries between action and performance, between what happens at the games and what happens outside them.⁴⁸ It becomes difficult to distinguish the maddened Trojan women from

⁴⁴ Similarly, the unarmed and helmetless Lykaon has no recourse against Achilles' attack (*Iliad* 21.49–119). Defeated warriors are often stripped of their helmets along with the rest of their armour by their conquerors (*Iliad* 10.458), and lacking a helmet can be a sign of actual as well as potential defeat. When Patroclus, for example, has Achilles' helmet struck from his head by Apollo at *Iliad* 16.793, this loss both makes possible and presages his imminent death.

⁴⁵ They are the 'other': Nugent 1992.

⁴⁶ The hollowed rocks that the women seek may also recall the cave where Aeneas and Dido came together in Book Four (165–6). This event, like the attempted burning of the ships, is marked as a first cause of trouble (*primus ... primusque*, 169), and – both as a diversion for Aeneas and the origin of a rival heir – parallels and underlines the challenge to Ascanius' future that his interaction with the Trojan women represents in Book Five.

⁴⁷ On the theatricality of the circus where Anchises' funeral games are celebrated, see Polleichtner 2013: 157–60.

⁴⁸ Feldherr 1995 argues that *ad tumulum cuneosque theatri / incensas perfert navis Eumelus* (*Aen.* 5.664–5), 'almost implies that [the messenger] is bringing the ships themselves onto the stage. In fact the Trojans by turning around are able to see the

the frenzied women of tragedy that they and their epic counterparts, Amata, the Italian women and particularly Dido, resemble.

Thus when Ascanius appears, still in costume, fresh from the *lusus Troiae*, and reveals himself to the women in an attempt to spark *anagnorisis*, it seems that yet another performance may be being played out before our eyes. Ascanius here assumes the role not of Orestes, pursued by his torch-bearing mother, but Pentheus, the other tragic hero mentioned in Book Four when Dido was haunted by Aeneas' ghost (469–70).⁴⁹ There are significant similarities between Ascanius' attempt to bring the Trojan women to their senses and Pentheus' attempt at self-declaration in Euripides' *Bacchae*.⁵⁰

πρώτη δὲ μήτηρ ἤρξεν ἱερέα φόνου
καὶ προσπίτνει νιν· ὃ δὲ μίτραν κόμης ἄπο
ἔρριπεν, ὥς νιν γνωρίσασα μὴ κτάνοι
τλήμων Ἀγαύη, καὶ λέγει, παρηίδος
ψαύων· Ἐγὼ τοι, μήτερ, εἰμί, παῖς σέθεν
Πενθεύς, ὃν ἔτεκες ἐν δόμοις Ἐχίονος·
οἴκτιρε δ' ὦ μήτέρ με, μηδὲ ταῖς ἐμαῖς
ἀμαρτίαισι παῖδα σὸν κατακτάνης. (Euripides, *Bacchae* 1114–21)

His mother, as priestess, began the slaughter, and fell upon him. He threw the headband from his head so that the wretched Agave might recognise and not kill him. Touching her cheek, he said: 'It is I, mother, your son, Pentheus, whom you bore in the house of Echion. Pity me, mother, and do not kill me, your child, for my sins.'

Pentheus' 'It is I, ... your son Pentheus' (Ἐγὼ τοι ... εἰμί, παῖς σέθεν / Πενθεύς, 1118–19) is echoed in Ascanius' *en, ego vester / Ascanius* (672–3). Pentheus' 'mother' (μήτερ, 1118) becomes Ascanius' *cives* (671). Pentheus removes his disguising feminine headgear (μίτραν, 1115), while Ascanius removes his deceitful

smoke from their seats (*respiciunt*, 5.666). The text leaves open the question whether the burning of the ships means the end of the carefully staged spectacle or simply its continuation, a change of scene' (264–5).

⁴⁹ On tragedy in the *Aeneid*, see Galinsky 2003; Hardie 1991a, 1997; E. L. Harrison 1972–3; Muecke 1983; Panoussi 2002; Spence 1999; Wlosok 1976. On tragedy in Roman epic, see Gildenhard and Zissos 2000. The suggestion that Ascanius here plays the part of Pentheus is now also made by Oliensis 2009: 69–70. See Gowers 2011: 108, n. 80.

⁵⁰ For the text see Dodds 1960. The parallel was suggested by Conington 1884, *ad Aen.* 5.671, though his observation led him to a quite different conclusion. Conington comments that Ascanius' address to the women as *cives* 'reminds them at once of their

galea inanis (673).⁵¹ Both Pentheus and Ascanius call on shared experience with the frenzied women in their appeal: Pentheus invokes Echion's halls, while Ascanius speaks of the Greek camp outside the walls of Troy. Both Pentheus and Ascanius are youthful and impulsive.⁵² Both Pentheus and Ascanius fail to gain a satisfactory response to their appeal, though Pentheus does not have his father and a troop of soldiers behind him and suffers a far worse fate than Ascanius as a consequence. The women who come to their senses are 'like Agave, painfully restored to her senses by Cadmus at the end of Euripides' *Bacchae*'.⁵³ And the Trojan women's eventual fate, expulsion from Aeneas' mission, exile from the Roman future, echoes the exile of the women of Thebes once Pentheus' slaughter has been revealed.

There are further hints that we can read an echo of Pentheus in Virgil's account of the Trojan women burning the ships in the third book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where he gives a parallel to Virgil's narrative of Rome's foundations, the story of the foundation and history of Thebes.⁵⁴ Ovid's Pentheus echoes Virgil's Ascanius in the opening lines of his speech to the Thebans, who have united in worship of the maddening Dionysus. He asks:

'quis furor, anguigenae, proles Mavortia, vestras
attonuit mentes?' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.531–2)

'What frenzy, children of the snake, offspring of Mars, has stunned your capacity for thought?'

relation to him and of the city the hope of which they are destroying. Ascanius supposes that they must fancy in their frenzy that they are burning a Greek camp or fleet, as Agave fancied that she was tearing a calf in pieces when she was dismembering her son. But their delusion was of a different kind, as the context shows. Thus it seems out of place to suppose ... that they do not recognise Ascanius, though doubtless he believes that they do not, and takes off his helmet accordingly.'

⁵¹ Oliensis 2009: 70 suggests that the emptiness (headlessness) of the helmet might also echo Pentheus' fate: 'No doubt Ascanius kept his head when he threw down his helmet. It is the unnecessary adjective that makes us contemplate the impossible alternative, one realized at the end of the *Bacchae* when the triumphant Agave enters brandishing Pentheus' head impaled on a thyrsus.'

⁵² Further on the characterisation of Pentheus and the themes of the *Bacchae*, see C. Barrett 1998; Segal 1997.

⁵³ Oliensis 2009: 70.

⁵⁴ On the close parallels this narrative implies between Thebes' and Rome's foundations, see Hardie 1990.

Pentheus' *quis furor* echoes Ascanius' *quis furor* in Book Five (670).⁵⁵ And by recalling his people to their identity with *anguigenae, proles Mavortia* – an identity which ought to bar them from worshipping Dionysus – he reworks Ascanius' admonitory *cives* in his address to the Trojan women who are threatening the future of the city and nation that is the Trojans' divinely ordained destiny.⁵⁶ Moreover, perception of these hints of Ascanius in Ovid's Pentheus is encouraged by a previous echo of the ship-burning scene in Book Five in Ovid's Theban narrative. Before Pentheus comes the story of Semele, in which the vengeful Juno disguises herself as the elderly nurse Beroe in order to persuade her to take action that will lead to her death. Juno's disguise is modelled on Virgil's description of Allecto's disguise as the aged priestess Calybe to deceive Turnus in Book Seven (415–19). Her name, however, recalls Virgil's Iris in Book Five, disguising herself as the elderly Trojan Beroe in order to deceive the Trojan women (620–1).

Seeing Ascanius in Book Five as a double of Euripides' Pentheus significantly heightens our concerns about his survival to, and beyond, the end of Virgil's epic. In adding another perspective on Ascanius to the many which we have seen as we followed his progress from Book Three to Book Five, it further stresses his flexibility too, the ease with which he fits into many different narratives, and the contingency of the future we are repeatedly told he represents. Ascanius moves in an epic landscape still far removed from the Roman Italy of the desired future, an idyllically happy land said by Propertius to be free from the crimes of Greek tragedy, where Pentheus is not hunted by the Bacchae (*Penthea non saevae venantur in arbore Bacchae*, 3.22.33), where fellow citizens listen peacefully to one's rhetoric, and where *spes* and succession are assured:⁵⁷

haec tibi, Tulle, parens, haec est pulcherrima sedes,
hic tibi pro digna gente petendus honos,

⁵⁵ See further Barchiesi and Rosati 2009, whose text I use here, *ad Metamorphoses* 3.531.

⁵⁶ Feldherr 1997 notes, 'Pentheus' address to the Thebans ... attempts to unite the entire Theban community ... the conception of civic unity that Pentheus attempts to put into practice again bridges the gap between mythical Thebes and contemporary Rome' (44).

⁵⁷ The repetitions *haec ... haec ... / hic ... / hic ... hic* (39–41) and mention of a future bride (42) suggest that Propertius here is thinking of the identification of Italy as the Trojans' homeland (*hic domus, haec patria est*, *Aen.* 7.122), and perhaps also of Lavinia

hic tibi ad eloquium cives, hic ampla nepotum
 spes, et venturae coniugis aptus amor. (Propertius 3.22.39–42)

This, Tullus, is the land which gave you birth, this is the most beautiful of resting places, here is the office you must seek as befits your worthy family: here are fellow citizens to listen to your speeches, here there is ample hope of descendants and a fitting love of a wife still to come.

Virgil uses the character of Ascanius in Book Five to gesture towards such an ideal place, where generation follows upon generation, and peaceful integration is the theme. Ascanius represents the seamless importation of Eastern custom to Rome, teaching the *lulus Troiae* to the Latins so that their young Roman descendants will embody the fallen city and give it a transient but repeated presence in Augustus' city. In this way, his role is in keeping with that of his father Aeneas, a Dionysus-like figure who brings Eastern custom and religious practices to Italy.⁵⁸ Soon after, however, Ascanius appears as a Pentheus-like figure, though one who manages to escape being torn to pieces by Bacchants working against the epic plot. Seen through the frame of the *Bacchae*, both Ascanius and the Trojan women represent resistance to the merger between East and West. Thus, even in Book Five when the Trojans move so much closer to assuming a Roman identity, Ascanius remains poised between Troy and Rome, as he was in Book One. More than that, some doubt is raised as to whether he is the right person to bridge the two. Ascanius is not only a flexible figure, and an endangered one, but also, it begins to be suggested, a rash young character who could emerge to oppose his father and, thus, the very future he represents. Subsequent chapters will investigate the tensions between Ascanius and Aeneas in more detail; the next investigates Virgil's depiction of Troy's fall, where again we will see Ascanius and the Roman future endangered by fire, and the ease with which Ascanius and the future he stands for can be misunderstood is underlined.

as Aeneas' new wife (*illic ... regia coniunx / parta tibi*, *Aen.* 2.783–4), in the *Aeneid*. Heyworth and Morwood 2011, whose text I use here, also suggest that *ampla nepotum spes* is 'an ironic echo of *Aen.* 2.503 *spes tanta nepotum* referring to the fifty bedrooms of Priam's sons in his palace' (323), another indication that Propertius is engaging closely with the *Aeneid* at this point. For Ascanius and *spes* see pp. 92–4.

⁵⁸ For Aeneas as Dionysus, see Mac Góráin 2013.

CHAPTER 6

TROJAN FIRE

The Trojan games in Book Five consolidated an impression of Virgil's Ascanius as a potential future leader of his people; yet he was still vulnerable to forces which threatened the infusion of Trojan blood into the Italy that he represents and prone in particular to being misunderstood and swept up in inappropriate futures, at odds with the destiny laid down by Jupiter. This intimate interconnection of hope, anxiety and non-comprehension had already been played out in an iconic scene in Book Two, where the reader was taken back in time to the destruction of Troy, as Aeneas told Dido the story of how he came to Carthage.¹ Here, at the very beginnings of Roman history, Aeneas' son is again used to reveal the Roman future, when miraculous flames suddenly appear around his head. In this ominous episode, Ascanius is instrumental in illuminating the path that must be taken in order ultimately to achieve the Roman dream. Providing the impetus for his family's flight from Troy, the young prince thus begins to play his part in the achievement of that great future symbolised by the changing of his name to Iulus. At the same time, however, the fires that fail to harm him carry other associations, hinting at different potential outcomes and reminding us again that his role as a sign and guarantor of a Roman future is not as secure or as patent as it might seem.

Future Greatness

The Trojan story in the *Aeneid* begins properly on the night that Troy is finally destroyed by the Greeks after their long and legendary siege. This history, which Aeneas recounts for Dido in Carthage, filling the second book of Virgil's epic, reaches its

¹ On Aeneas' epic narration in Books Two and Three as a paradigm for the delivery of the larger poem, see Laird 2003.

climax when Aeneas' aged father Anchises insists that he will not leave Troy and stubbornly 'refuses to prolong his life once Troy has been razed to the ground' (*abnegat excisa vitam producere Troia*, 637).² He declares his fixed intention of remaining to wait for death at the hands of Troy's destroyers, while his son takes the rest of the family to safety, concluding with a despondent allusion to the punishment he received for boasting of his relationship with Venus:³

'iam pridem invisus divis et inutilis annos
demoror, ex quo me divum pater atque hominum rex
fulminis adflavit ventis et contigit igni.' (*Aeneid* 2.647–9)

'I am already loathed by the gods and I have been for a very long time. I am a burden, lingering on through the useless years.⁴ That's been true ever since the father of the gods, king of men, scorched me with the winds of his thunderbolt, touching me with divine fire.'

No amount of tearful pleading from his son, his daughter-in-law Creusa or the other members of his household can move him from his position, and it seems that the statue standing in the *forum Augustum*, with Aeneas, Ascanius and Anchises united in their escape from Troy, will be fractured before its formation, as Aeneas responds to his father's obdurate stance with an equally destructive determination that none of the family will escape Troy's fall. As the utterly wretched (*miserrimus*, 655) hero moves to leave and seek death in the chaos outside, his distraught wife Creusa holds his young son up to him in supplication, begging him to stay. At this moment of absolute crisis, a miracle occurs:

talia vociferans gemitu tectum omne replebat,
cum subitum dictuque oritur mirabile monstrum.
namque manus inter maestorumque ora parentum
ecce levis summo de vertice visus Iuli

² On the generally despairing reaction of the aged characters of the *Aeneid* to its events, see Elftmann 1979: 186–9.

³ The conclusion of the fifth Homeric hymn, which details the liaison between Aphrodite (Venus) and Anchises, threatens the Trojan with a thunderbolt from the father of the gods if he reveals Aeneas' true parentage (286–8). The myths about Anchises' relationship with Venus and its consequences, which were said to include not only laming but also blinding or death, are further detailed in R. G. Austin 1964, *ad Aen.* 2.649, and discussed by Rose 1924.

⁴ I translate *demoror* here in both its active and passive senses.

fundere lumen apex, tactuque innoxia mollis
 lambere flamma comas et circum tempora pasci. (*Aeneid* 2.679–84)

Making such vocal pleas, she filled the whole house with lament, when a sudden portent arose, amazing to relate. Between the hands of his grieving parents, between their two faces, look! from the very top of Ascanius' head there appeared a small point, shedding light, and a flame, harmless to the touch, licked his soft hair and browsed around his brow.

This proves to be the turning point in the family's history. Anchises calls for confirmation of the omen and when a crash of thunder and a star shooting towards Ida and their escape route follow (692–8),⁵ he sees it as a promise that the gods will protect them, and consents to leave, paving the way for the future glories shared by Rome and his descendants, whose fate is to be inextricably entwined with that of the great city.

The omen is a Virgilian addition to the narrative of Troy's fall, lending a suggestion of divine approval to the family's somewhat controversial escape from the doomed city.⁶ It is also, this chapter argues, surprisingly ambiguous: there is a clear, positive interpretation of the startling scene, but it also betrays the ease with which it could be misunderstood, or even written into alternative future histories, terminal to Ascanius and his hopes. In Roman tradition, miraculous fires or illumination surrounding an individual were generally seen as a promise of extraordinary success, or an unexpected reversal of fortune, that could only be explained by citing the particular interest of the gods in the affairs and the future of the individual so distinguished.⁷ Cassius Dio tells the story of Salvidienus Rufus, a man of humble origins, advanced by Caesar to the consulship, whose rise was signalled by a flame that issued from his head as he was tending his flocks,⁸ while Suetonius

⁵ As Gleii 1997: 140 notes, the flame omen is an *augurium oblativum*, while the thunder-clap and shooting star that follow Anchises' request for 'aid' (*auxilium*, 691) form an *augurium impetrativum*. J. Henry 1873–89, *ad Aen.* 2.691, may well be right in preferring *augurium* to *auxilium*, an argument further expounded by R. G. Austin 1964, *ad loc.*

⁶ On alternative stories of how Aeneas and his family survived Troy, see Casali 1999 and above, p. 15.

⁷ Such stories are not exclusive to Roman myth. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the day of the Pentecost is marked in the New Testament by a tongue of fire appearing on their heads (Acts 2.3). Further parallels to the biblical passage are cited by C. K. Barrett 1994, *ad loc.*

⁸ 48.33.2.

records that the day before Tiberius, on Rhodes, received certain notification of his return to Rome, his tunic blazed with sudden fire.⁹ In similar stories of future glory, a glow was said to have illuminated the room in which the infant Hercules struggled with the serpents sent by Hera,¹⁰ and a rainbow is reported by a late fourth-century collector of prodigies to have surrounded Octavian when he entered Rome in 44 BCE.¹¹

In military contexts, too, such miraculous flames forecast outstanding victories against great odds, even leading to the rule of great kingdoms. The Roman general Lucius Marcius, who achieved remarkable successes in Spain after the deaths of the Scipios seemed to crush Roman hopes of victory during the Second Punic war, was also allegedly distinguished by the unexpected appearance of flames about his head when addressing his troops.¹² On the shield given to Aeneas by Venus in Book Eight of the *Aeneid*, Augustus leads the Italians into battle at Actium with twin flames streaming from his brow,¹³ and when Aeneas returns to the Trojan camp in Book Ten flames blaze from his head and the boss of his shield, marking both his ferocity and his eventual victory over the Italians.¹⁴

The fires around Ascanius' head in Troy thus not only signify the family's miraculous escape and royal destiny but also, by echoes elsewhere in the *Aeneid*, link Aeneas, Ascanius and Augustus together, further reinforcing Jupiter's prophecy of succession in Book One. This theme, moreover, is underlined by echoes of the Julian star mentioned in Book Eight (681) in both the comet that provides confirmation to Anchises of his interpretation of the portent in Book Two (693–4) and the comet and blazing star to which Aeneas is likened in Book Ten (272–5).¹⁵

⁹ *Tiberius* 14.4.

¹⁰ Theocritus, *Idylls* 24.23–4. Parallels to this supernatural illumination are given by Gow 1950, ad 24.22.

¹¹ Julius Obsequens, *Liber de Prodigiiis* 68. Cf. also Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 1.568–73, where Jupiter marks the Dioscuri with a benign fire, which signifies their literal ascent to the stars.

¹² Livy 25.39.16; Pliny, *Natural History* 2.241; Valerius Maximus 1.6.2.

¹³ *Aen.* 8.680–1. On flames in *Aeneid* 8, see Scully 2000.

¹⁴ *Aen.* 10.270–1.

¹⁵ D. West 1993: 5–16; Hardie 2013: 119; Pandey 2013: 427–31. The Julian star appeared at the games given by Octavian in honour of Venus, following the assassination of

The promise of a regal future is also enhanced by echoes of the flames that surrounded Ascanius in Book Two and the shooting star that followed them in the flaming arrow shot by Acestes during Anchises' funeral games,¹⁶ which distinguishes the Trojan hero, who is soon to find unexpected elevation as the ruler of those Trojans left behind in Sicily, and is explicitly marked as an omen of a future worthy of an epic itself (*seraque terrifici cecinerunt omina vates*, 524).¹⁷

That such omens were viewed as signs of future greatness finds further confirmation in Silius Italicus' *Punica*, when flames about the head of the sleeping sixteen-year-old Carthaginian commander, Masinissa, are interpreted as a sign of the power he would accrue as a result of an alliance with Rome:¹⁸

huic fesso, quos dura fuga et nox suaserat atra,
carpent somnos subitus rutilante coruscum
vertice fulsit apex, crispamque involvere visa est
mitis flamma comam atque hirta se spargere fronte.
concurrunt famuli et serpentis tempora circum
festinant gelidis restinguere fontibus ignes;
at grandaeva deum praenoscens omina mater
'sic, sic, caelicolae, portentaque vestra secundi
condite' ait. 'duret capiti per saecula lumen.
ne vero, ne, nate, deum tam laeta pavesce
prodigia aut sacras metue inter tempora flammās.
hic tibi Dardaniae promittit foedera gentis,
hic tibi regna dabit regnis maiora paternis
ignis et adiunget Latiis tua nomina fatis.' (Silius Italicus, *Punica* 16.118–31)

He was worn out and snatching some sleep, which both his arduous flight and the black night had made mandatory, when a sudden point

Caesar, in 44 BCE. It later decorated the brow of statues of the deified Caesar, as a reminder of the interpretation of the comet as his soul winging its way to heaven. For the evolution of this statue type, see Koortbojian 2013: 94–128.

¹⁶ *Aen.* 5.525–8. Verbal parallels encourage comparison of the two episodes. The arrow, described as a *subitum* ... *magnoque futurum / augurio monstrum* (522–3), recalls the *subitum* ... *monstrum* (680) of Book Two, while in pointing out its path (*signavitque viam*, 526) the arrow echoes the shooting star that points out the escape route to Ida in Book Two (*signantemque vias*, 697).

¹⁷ Positive interpretation of the omen of Acestes' flaming arrow may, however, be shaken by closer consideration of the great future that it looks forward to. Conington 1884 comments *ad loc.* that 'the meaning seems to be ... that what then came to pass was really a portent of evil, though not understood so at the time'.

¹⁸ For the text see Delz 1987.

flashed a gleam with reddish tip, and a gentle flame seemed to engulf his curly hair and to shed itself from his shaggy brow. The household ran up and hastened to snuff out the fires snaking around his forehead with ice-cold water; but his aged mother, already attuned to the omens of the gods, said, 'Just in this way, o dwellers in the sky, just so must you show favour and put your portents on a firm footing: may the light of his head live throughout the ages. My son, do not – indeed, do not – dread such joyful signs from the gods or fear the holy fires around your head. This promises you treaties with the Roman descendants of Troy, this fire will grant you greater kingdoms than the kingdoms of your forefathers and will unite your name with Latin destinies.'

There are significant verbal parallels between Silius' description of the ominous flames surrounding the young Masinissa and Virgil's depiction of the portent that distinguished the even younger Ascanius during the fall of Troy. Silius' *subitus ... / vertice ... apex ... visa est / ... flamma comam ... / ... tempora circum* (119–22) echo *subitum ... / ... vertice visus ... / ... apex ... / ... flamma comas ... circum tempora* (680–4) in Aeneas' narrative, and the attempts by members of Masinissa's retinue to extinguish the flames (*restinguere fontibus ignis*, 123) mirror exactly the response of Ascanius' alarmed parents to the portent in Troy (*Aen.* 2.686).¹⁹ The correspondences between the two passages are pointed to by Masinissa's mother, who refers to the Romans by their Trojan patronymic (*Dardaniae ... gentis*, 129),²⁰ and Silius' reworking of the Virgilian passage suggests very strongly a reading of the ominous flames surrounding Ascanius' head as a secure sign of the regal future he was promised by Jupiter in Book One.

Such a reading is, moreover, supported by the most famous Roman case of spontaneous flames as an omen of future glory, that of Servius Tullius, future king of Rome. Livy describes how the young man came to be plucked from obscurity by Queen Tanaquil

¹⁹ The parallels are further strengthened by the similarity of Silius' *mitis* (121) to Virgil's *levis* (682) and *innocia* (683). There may also be a reminder of the fiery portent that presages Lavinia's glorious future in Book Seven, the second sighting of such ominous flames in the *Aeneid*, with Silius' *involvere* (120) and *spargere* (121) echoing Virgil's *involvere* and *spargere* (77).

²⁰ Her reference to the Latins (*adiungit Latiis tua nomina fatis*, 131) also hints at the destiny of Aeneas' descendants to unite Trojan and Latin in founding the Roman race, on which see above, pp. 27–31.

in response to the ominous flames that appeared about his head as he was sleeping:²¹

eo tempore in regia prodigium visu eventumque mirabile fuit. puero dormienti, cui Servio Tullio fuit nomen, caput arsisse ferunt multorum in conspectu; plurimo igitur clamore inde ad tantae rei miraculum orto excitos reges, et cum quidam familiarium aquam ad restinguendum ferret, ab regina retentum, sedatoque eam tumultu moveri vetuisse puerum donec sua sponte expectatus esset; mox cum somno et flammam abissee. tum abducto in secretum viro Tanaquil ‘videsne tu puerum hunc,’ inquit, ‘quem tam humili cultu educamus? scire licet hunc lumen quondam rebus nostris dubiis futurum praesidiumque regiae adflictae; proinde materiam ingentis publice privatimque decoris omni indulgentia nostra nutriamus.’ (Livy 1.39.1–3)

At that time in the kingdom there was a portent, strange to see and a strange event. They say that as the boy called Servius Tullius was sleeping his head caught fire in full view of many people. As a result a great outcry then arose at the wonder of such a great occurrence and the king and queen were woken up. When one of the household brought water to quench the flames, he was held back by the queen, and she calmed their disturbance and forbade that the boy be moved until he should wake up on his own. Soon the flame abated, as did his sleep. And then Queen Tanaquil took her husband aside in secret and said, ‘Do you see this boy, whom we have raised in such a lowly manner? We have been given the opportunity to realise that he will one day be a light when our situation is clouded, and a future support of our embattled kingdom. Let us therefore nurture the source of great public and private glory with all our indulgent care.’

This was a well-known story,²² and the parallels with the story Virgil tells about Ascanius are striking: like Ascanius, Servius Tullius is a child when the portent occurs, and the ominous flames about his head disturb the witnesses, who try to extinguish the blaze.²³ One member of the audience reacts differently, seeing a meaning in the

²¹ Text from Ogilvie 1974. See Ogilvie 1965, *ad loc.* for the tradition of fire omens associated with future rulers in the classical world. On Servius Tullius, see Ridley 1975.

²² That the tale was well known is attested by Cicero: ‘what history does not tell of Servius Tullius’ head on fire as he slept?’ *caput arsisse Servio Tullio dormienti quae historia non prodidit?* (*de Divinatione* 1.121). The story is told by several other authors, including: Pliny, *Natural History* 2.241, 36.204; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 4.2.4; Ovid, *Fasti* 6.625–36; Plutarch, *de Fortuna Romanorum* 323c; Valerius Maximus 1.6.1.

²³ In both accounts, too, the fiery portent is marked as a significant omen: Livy’s *prodigium visu eventumque mirabile* is echoed by Virgil’s *dictumque ... mirabile monstrum* (*Aen.* 2.680). On links between Livy’s Servius Tullius, Virgil’s Ascanius and Silius’ Masinissa, see Khariouzov 2013: 70–7.

omen that is hidden from the rest, which leads immediately to a hitherto unexpected course of action with dramatic consequences both for the child at the centre of the portent and for the people he was destined to rule. In Servius Tullius' case the flames denote his parentage by Vulcan, and raise him above the obscurity of his origins.²⁴ A reader might imagine, then, that the flames in the *Aeneid* denote Ascanius' divine descent while hinting at the same time that, like Servius, he would rule over a people that was not entirely his own.²⁵

Such a reading is endorsed by the late fourth-century CE writer Claudian, who says explicitly that the omen marked Ascanius' future power, while discussing the great glory foretold for Honorius by a comet that appeared on the day of his birth.²⁶ And interpretation of the omen as a sign of Ascanius' future regal status is further encouraged later in the *Aeneid*, in Book Seven, when the Latin princess Lavinia's hair suddenly catches on fire as she attends her father at a sacrifice:²⁷

visa (nefas) longis comprehendere crinibus ignem
atque omnem ornatum flamma crepitante cremari,
regalisque accensa comas, accensa coronam
insignem gemmis; tum fumida lumine fulvo
involvi ac totis Volcanum spargere tectis.
id vero horrendum ac visu mirabile ferri:
namque fore inlustrem fama fatisque canebant
ipsam, sed populo magnum portendere bellum. (*Aeneid* 7.73–80)

Her long hair seemed (unspeakable!) to catch fire and all her adornments were burning up in the crackling flames, her royal locks were ablaze, her dazzlingly bejewelled tiara was on fire; then she smoked, enveloped in a yellow glare and scattered fire throughout the whole house. That, they say, truly was a hair-raising and marvellous sight: for they predicted that she would be distinguished – a celebrity, someone marked by the fates – but that for the people she was a portent of a great war.

²⁴ Servius Tullius' mother was generally said to have been a slave in the household of King Tarquin, impregnated by a ghostly phallus that appeared in a hearth, representative either of Vulcan or the *lar familiaris*. See Livy 1.39.4–6; Ovid, *Fasti* 6.627–36.

²⁵ We might note that the same omen also marks Masinissa's destined union with a foreign people (*Punica* 16.131).

²⁶ Claudian, *de quarto Consulatu Honorii* 192–5. Further on Claudian's reworking of the Virgilian passage see Barr 1981, *ad loc.*; Lehner 1984: 50ff.

²⁷ Further on flame portents in the *Aeneid* see Boas 1938: 165–75; Grassman-Fischer 1966: 19–24, 67–77.

It is, however, when we look at the omen in Book Seven that some doubts arise concerning the assumption that much the same portent in Troy must have a positive meaning that is clear and uncomplicated. Popular interpretation of Lavinia's burning hair emphasises its double-edged nature: it predicts a distinguished future for Lavinia, but war for her people.²⁸ In addition, like many omens, Lavinia's burning tresses are confusing, and her father, Latinus, seeks clarification of the portent from the oracle of Faunus, who confirms Lavinia's destiny as the bride of the stranger Aeneas. This union between Trojan and Latin, the oracle concludes, will forge a nation that will rule the world:²⁹

'externi venient generi, qui sanguine nostrum
nomen in astra ferant, quorumque a stirpe nepotes
omnia sub pedibus.' (*Aeneid* 7.98–100)

'A foreign nation will come, who will carry our name to the stars with
their blood; the offspring of their stock will have everything beneath
their feet.'

This, too, may well encourage us to see a glorious future in the flames around Ascanius' head. The fact that the same omen is visited upon Aeneas' Trojan son and his Latin bride-to-be can easily be read as a further sign of the closely linked destiny of the Trojan and Italian royal houses. I do not wish to downplay the strong positive message that this passage, viewed in the light of awareness of the Servius Tullius story in particular, encourages readers to find in the fires of Book Two. However, the implicit comparison between Ascanius and Lavinia also brings to mind that they represent two warring lines of descent from Aeneas, complicating the belief that the omen of Book Two marks Ascanius as a future leader of his people, symbol and instrument of a glorious destiny. The disturbing violence of Lavinia's omen, marked by a description of the portent as *nefas* (73) and *horrendum* (78), points to the menacing symbolism of such comet-like flames, which suggest

²⁸ The promise of *fama* for Lavinia is also somewhat equivocal: on the downsides of celebrity in the *Aeneid* see Hardie 2012: 78–125.

²⁹ We might note, however, that even this clarifying oracle is open to more than one interpretation: part of the fame conferred upon the Latins by the Trojans will come about due to the shedding of blood on both sides, another implication of the ablative of means *sanguine* in line 98, as noted by Reckford 1961: 260; O'Hara 1990: 63.

civil strife and as well as great achievements.³⁰ It also evokes the disturbing, fiery context of the first omen at Troy, soon to be repeated as the Trojan war is replayed on Italian soil, suggesting that confusion as well as comprehension, loss as well as survival, is signified by Ascanius' burning head in Book Two.

Present Danger

The presentiment of loss is encouraged by the detail that the fateful flames around Ascanius' head appeared in front of his parents' astonished eyes (*inter maestorumque ora parentum*, 681), with their astonishment emphasised by the striking open-mouthed elision of *ora*. In the early books of the *Aeneid* in particular, children who are described appearing *ante ora parentum* are inevitably seen thus in the moment of their deaths, as the natural order of generations is tragically overturned.³¹ Aeneas plays on the horror with which the premature death of children was regarded, when he uses this destiny as an example against which to contrast and stress his own sufferings, declaring that those who died in view of their parents during the siege of Troy had an enviable lot compared to his tempest-tossed fate, as a fierce storm strikes the Trojan fleet in Book One:

'... o terque quaterque beati,
quis ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis
contigit oppetere!' (*Aeneid* 1.94–6)

'Three and four times blessed is he whose lot it was to die before the gaze of his parents beneath Troy's lofty walls.'

Then, twice in Book Two, as Aeneas tells the story of the sack of his city, and not long before he comes to the miraculous fiery omen which allowed his family's escape, he dwells on the awful

³⁰ Pandey 2013: 428–9. For the disturbing violence of the omen, see also Reckford 1961: 258–60.

³¹ In the later books of the *Aeneid* too, appearances of children *ante ora parentum* occur in descriptions of untimely death. For example, among the shades imploring entrance into the underworld in Book Six we find young men who have been buried by their parents (*Aen.* 6.308 = *Georgics* 4.477), while weeping parents watch their children being slaughtered from the walls of Latinus' city during the war in Italy (*Aen.* 11.887–90). The

ends of those who did not survive. First he recounts the death of Priam's son Polites, who was killed by Pyrrhus *ante ... ora parentum* (531). Soon afterwards, when pleading with Anchises to abandon his determination to remain in Troy and save his family, who would otherwise share the fate of their compatriots, he again speaks of Pyrrhus' habits of impious and dreadful slaughter, killing sons in front of their fathers (*natum ante ora patris*, 663).

Aeneas' recent evocations of the death of Polites clearly echo in his description of Ascanius surrounded by ominous fire in the view of his sorrowing parents, provoking some anxiety about the young prince's fate. Moreover, Creusa's desperate plea to Aeneas not to leave her and their son to the mercies of the Greeks (675–8) is not the first time that the great danger in which Ascanius stands in the midst of the ravaged city has been brought to mind. Immediately after witnessing Pyrrhus' slaughter of Polites and Priam, Aeneas fears for the first time for his wife and child (*subiit deserta Creusa / et direpta domus et parvi casus Iuli*, 562–3) and is soon afterwards reminded of them again by his mother Venus, admonishing him not to be caught up in the deadly frenzy of battle but to look to his family (596–8). When the flame omen appears before the eyes of Aeneas' distraught household, it is, then, very clear that his son stands in danger of losing his life, another young victim of the Trojan war.³²

The impression of imminent danger threatening the prince is further sharpened by the recollection of another youthful casualty of the same war, who is brought to mind by the words that the poet puts in the hero's mouth. The pathetic depiction of Ascanius held between his grieving parents (*maestorumque ... parentum*, 681) recalls Lucretius' portrayal of the grieving Agamemnon and his child, Iphigenia, about to become a sacrifice to the cause of the war:³³

only exceptions come in Book Five, during the performance of the *lusus Troiae* (553, and cf. 576), discussed above, pp. 79–86. Further on the *ante ora parentum* theme in the *Aeneid* see O'Sullivan 2009.

³² This danger is stressed still further if we find in the scene where Ascanius is held between Aeneas and Creusa an echo of the similar embrace of the doomed Astyanax by his parents, Hector and Andromache, before Hector goes out to his final battle (*Iliad* 6.482–3). Further on Ascanius and Astyanax see pp. 65–70 and 185–7.

³³ Bailey 1922. The comparison between Ascanius and Iphigenia is strengthened by the realisation that the tearful members of the household, mentioned a few lines previously

et maestum simul ante aras adstare parentem
sensit (Lucretius, *de Rerum Natura* 1.89–90)

And at the same time she perceived her unhappy father standing before
the altars.

Sacrifice is a pervasive theme throughout Virgil's narrative of the fall of Troy in Book Two,³⁴ and the sacrifice of Iphigenia had been recalled earlier by Sinon (116–19), citing it as a reason for his own alleged imminent sacrifice by the Greeks. Throughout the early books of the *Aeneid* in particular, there is a clear sense of the danger that the Trojans will repeat the destructive patterns laid down in the *Iliad*,³⁵ and the ghostly presence of Iphigenia and her grieving parent adds still further to the trepidation induced by Virgil's description of the omen that proved the salvation of Rome's Trojan ancestors.³⁶

In its original context, then, Anchises' assumption that the omen is positive needs some explanation.³⁷ It is certainly not intuitive for the rest of his household. As the hero reveals, he and his wife Creusa, Ascanius' parents, are alarmed by the portent and try to extinguish the flames:

nos pavidī trepidare metu crinemque flagrantem
excute et sanctos restinguere fontibus ignis. (*Aeneid* 2.685–6)

We were terrified and quaked with fear and beat out the blazing hair, putting
the sacred fires out with water.

(*Aen.* 2.651–2), can be seen taking the place of the weeping citizens assembled to witness Iphigenia's sacrifice (*de Rerum Natura* 1.90–1). Further Lucretian echoes in *Aeneid* 2 are discussed by Hardie 1984, who notes several parallels between Virgil's depiction of the fall of Troy and Lucretius' narrative of the sacrifice of Iphigenia (410). Horsfall 2008, *ad loc.* rejects the Lucretian allusion but notes that the adjective *maestus* is 'hardly appropriate as a reaction to the wondrous flame'. As Stephen Oakley points out *per litteras*, however, it 'works well of their reaction to Anchises' obduracy': this is a moment of crisis and sorrow, and we should not be blinded to that fact by the paradoxically positive reading that Anchises gives us, no matter how persuasive it might be.

³⁴ Hardie 1984; R. M. Smith 1999. Sacrifice as a theme throughout the *Aeneid* is further discussed by Bandera 1981; Dyson 2001; Hardie 1993a, 1993b: 19–26, 49–53; Nicoll 1988.

³⁵ On repetition in the *Aeneid*, see Quint 1993: 50–96.

³⁶ The faint echo of the flames seen about Ascanius' head in Book Two in the later anticipation of Pallas' hair burning as he is cremated in Book Eleven (*arsurasque comas*, *Aen.* 11.77) heightens the fear aroused by these ominous fires.

³⁷ On interpretation of other difficult omens in the *Aeneid*, see Hardie 1987; Phillips 1997.

Their reaction is no surprise: up to this point in the story of Troy's fall, flames had proved destructive. The fate of the city was foretold in Hecuba's famous dream of the birth of her firebrand son,³⁸ and with Paris as a model it is no wonder that a second flaming prince fills his parents with fear of yet further disaster.³⁹ Moreover, imagery of fire, highlighting its terrifying power, pervades Aeneas' tale in Book Two,⁴⁰ and audiences have only just been reminded that Anchises himself had suffered from heavenly fire as an aftermath to his liaison with Venus (647–9). So, while the flame that surrounds Ascanius' head is reassuringly said to be harmless (*innoxia*, 683), the mysterious *apex* that pours radiance forth from the top of his head is declared to be light (*levis*, 682)⁴¹ and Aeneas, after the event, speaks of the flames positively as *sanctos* (686), these adjectives do not simply act to underscore the counter-intuitive nature of the miracle of non-burning flames. Their emphasis on the miraculous harmlessness of this particular fire directs attention back again to the fiery destruction surrounding the family, to which Ascanius' crown of flames is so starkly contrasted. Indeed, even the vocabulary that seems designed to be reassuring raises doubt: the flames which lick at Ascanius' hair and feed around his temples (*lambere flamma comas et circum tempora pasci*, 684) recall the licking tongues (*lambabant*, 211) of the fiery-eyed snakes that fed (*depascitur*, 215) on Laocoon and his two small children earlier in Book Two.⁴² In the doomed and burning city, with both the child and the future he represents in ever greater danger the longer his grandfather refuses to leave, the fact that Anchises' response to the omen of snaky fires around Ascanius' head is not one of alarm is almost as astonishing as the miracle itself.

³⁸ For the legend, first referred to by Pindar, fr. *Paeanes* 8.30, see: Hyginus, *Fabulae* 91.1; Apollodorus 3.12.5; Cicero, *de Divinatione* 1.42 (and Pease 1963, *ad loc.*); Ovid, *Heroides* 17.237–40. Hecuba's dream is also referred to by Euripides, *Troades* 919–22, and at *Aen.* 7.319–22, 10.704–5. In Hyginus' version, we also see the snakes which, as Knox 1950 shows, are another strong imagistic theme in Book Two of the *Aeneid*.

³⁹ On Ascanius as a substitute and replica of other young Trojan princes, see above, pp. 65–70, 74–7.

⁴⁰ Knox 1950. On the positive and negative connotations of fire in the *Aeneid*, see Jacobson 2008; Paschalis 1997: 13–14, 94–5, 182–3, 298. Further on Virgil's depiction of the fall of Troy, see Gransden 1985.

⁴¹ Horsfall 2008, *ad Aen.* 2.682, sees no problem with *apex* denoting the tip of a flame, and collects objectors.

⁴² Knox 1950: 396–8.

The miracle is not only astonishing, but is described in such an ambiguous way as to encourage Aeneas and Creusa's negative reaction as well as Anchises' positive one. The previous *monstrum* that faced the Trojans warns of the dangers of misinterpretation, as Aeneas reminds us, recalling how the Trojan horse paused portentously at the gates through which the heedless Trojans pulled it (241–5), while Aeneas' description of this omen strongly emphasises its enigmatic nature.⁴³ Suspense is heightened by the postponement of the subject, *monstrum*, to the end of line 680 and increased still further by the lines-long delay before the *monstrum* is revealed as the *apex* of line 683 and then, more explicitly, as the *flamma* of line 684.⁴⁴ There is, in addition, a long history of argument about what exactly the omen was. Many commentators would now agree that the *apex* said to have appeared on Ascanius' head indicates a point of flame, which is then glossed in the next line as a *flamma* feeding about the child's temples and licking at his soft hair.⁴⁵ However, the *apex* could also be interpreted, as Servius suggests *ad loc.*, as the ghostly spike of a *flamen*'s cap, like those seen on the priests in procession on the Ara Pacis, symbolising Ascanius' future priestly role at Alba Longa.⁴⁶ Moreover, despite commentators' attempts to eradicate uncertainty, a measure of confusion about the terms of reference used to describe the omen is encouraged by the ambiguous *visus* (682) on which the infinitives

⁴³ On the ambiguity of *monstra*, see Block 1981: 96–7; Luce 1963.

⁴⁴ Description of the *monstrum* as sudden (*subitum*, 680) ironically highlights this delay.

⁴⁵ R. G. Austin 1964, *ad loc.* states his opinion that this interpretation is 'unquestionably right'. Conington 1884 is more reserved, but notes that the authority of de la Cerda and many later commentators, as well as later Latin poets, such as Ovid and Statius (e.g. Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto* 4.9.53–4; Statius, *Thebaid* 5.87–8, 10.598–603), lie with a reading of this much-debated phrase as a reference to a point or tongue of fire. Conington also mentions other possibilities: that the *lumen apex* might refer to the Phrygian cap that Ascanius is often seen wearing in artistic representations of his history, such as the Aeneas group in the *forum Augustum*; or that it might indicate a natural protuberance or tuft of hair on the very crown of Ascanius' head (a suggestion he attributes to Henry, which does not, however, appear in his *Aeneidea*). These suggestions have found little support from other commentators.

⁴⁶ Servius, *ad Aen.* 2.683. According to Servius, Ascanius instituted the use of these special priestly caps in Alba Longa. There was a tradition that the Iulii wielded sacred authority in early Latium, on which see further Weinstock 1971: 79. Further on the ambiguity of the *levis ... lumen apex*, see Hardie 1984: 410–11, who suggests that Servius is drawing on a lost tradition about the son of Aeneas, rather than a desire to interpret Aeneas himself as an official religious figure, 411, n. 29. His argument that the reference to an

fundere, *lambere* and *pasci* depend,⁴⁷ which leaves room for doubt about whether the miracle was actual or only a mirage.

Uncertainty about the fiery portent mirrors the difficulties that have already beset the Trojans in discerning the true meaning of other alarming signs and fires that presaged their city's fall. The first sign of the destruction of Troy described by Virgil in Book Two of the *Aeneid* is, as noted above, to be found in Hecuba's famous dream of the birth of her son. Virgil's portrayal of the final night of battle within the city walls picks up on the themes of destruction through fire and the misinterpretation of omens of this first portent of the war. The recreation of Aeneas' experience is fitfully illuminated by the flames that spell the end of Trojan civilisation, while forebodings of fire and doom give hints of what is to come, striking fear into the hearts of the Trojans as they light up the murky future like brief flares in the night sky. The true meaning of these ominous flashes is obfuscated by the hopes, fears and imperfect knowledge of the characters who interpret them, and the lack of authorial comment in a story told and focalised by Aeneas⁴⁸ leaves the audience of the narrative to provide their own reading of the portentous flames that light up the final hours of Troy's history. And, perhaps surprisingly, the pressure exerted by the text itself to read them negatively is quite strong. It is not only the fires that consume Troy that give an edge of anxiety to the omen of Book Two; destructive fires elsewhere in the *Aeneid*, including in the attempted burning of the Trojan ships and Dido's Carthage, discussed in the [previous chapter](#), also suggest a very different reaction to that given by Anchises.

apex would cause a Roman audience to think of the cap, with its distinctive woollen fillet, worn by the *flamines*, finds support in Vanggaard 1988: 41. On the interests that may have motivated Servius' interpretation of the passage, see Starr 1997.

⁴⁷ *visus* with infinitives frequently appears in the description of epiphanies in dreams and of waking visions of events so strange that they can only be explained either as illusions or as the working of divine powers. Dream epiphanies: Cicero, *de Divinatione* 1.44; Plautus, *Miles gloriosus* 389; Ennius, *Annales* 1.2–3 (Skutsch 1985); *Aen.* 2.270–1, 4.556–7, 5.636–7, 8.31–3. Virgilian illusions, omens and visions of the miraculous or supernatural: *Georgics* 1.476–8, 3.108–9; *Aen.* 2.772–3, 5.722–3, 7.73–7. The present *videntur* appears at *Aen.* 1.395–6, on which see further Hardie 1984: 147. Cf. also *Aen.* 3.36, where the past participle is used as a noun, synonymous with *omen*.

⁴⁸ On focalisation and point of view in the *Aeneid*, see D. P. Fowler 1990; S. C. Smith 1999; G. W. Williams 1980: 165–83. On Virgilian storytelling, see D. P. Fowler 1997b. On Aeneas as a storyteller in Books Two and Three see Biow 1994; Johnson 1999; Putnam 1995: 50–72.

Discerning the meaning of the signs of Troy's fall is, moreover, no easy task: the difficulty of proper interpretation is a theme that becomes apparent in the first fiery hint of destruction in Book Two, in the deceitful tale told to the Trojans by Sinon. The Greek, like Virgil himself, chooses and manipulates material from the body of myth that deals with Troy's fall, moulding his narrative to fit and work on his audience.⁴⁹ Claiming that the Trojan horse is an offering by the Greeks to Athena to secure safe passage home for reinforcements and atone for the theft of the Palladium, Sinon stresses the ominous signs of the goddess's displeasure by recounting how the statue's eyes blazed with fire, sweat ran down its limbs and it lurched menacingly on its base, brandishing its weapons (171–5). These details help to convince the Trojans to lend credence to Sinon's tale of Greek flight, and, as Aeneas laments to Dido, they are defeated not by superior military force but by their inability to distinguish truth from falsehood (195–8).

Virgil's narrative, moreover, stresses the connection between flames and confusion both of mind and of the physical world. The story of the Palladium paves the way for the appearance of similar signs of the imminent doom of the Trojans, whose inability to interpret these signs correctly seals their catastrophic fate. Despite the warnings of Cassandra and others, and even despite Laocoon's emphatic demonstration of his mistrust of the Trojan horse by plunging a spear into it, and calling forth an ominous groan to which, as Aeneas later acknowledges, the Trojans were fatally deaf (50–6), they decide to bring the horse inside the walls of the city. The belief in Sinon's story is strengthened when Laocoon and his two small sons perish in the grip of two incandescent serpents in apparent punishment for the priest's attack on the wooden horse (199–224). Unaware that these hideous deaths were traditionally understood to presage the destruction of their city,⁵⁰ the Trojans rejoice as they drag the horse over the threshold and disregard its ominous reluctance to enter the gates (242–3).

In keeping with these warnings, flames soon engulf the city, as Aeneas relates the story of the last battle within Troy's walls. A fire

⁴⁹ On Sinon as a storyteller, see Cowan 2011; Hexter 1990; Lynch 1980; Molyneux 1986.

⁵⁰ Though in the *Iliou Persis* only one of Laocoon's sons dies and the survival of the other is seen as an allegory for the survival of Aeneas' family while Priam's perishes. On the myth of Laocoon, see further Kleinknecht 1944.

signal tells Sinon that the time has come to release the Greeks upon the unsuspecting Trojans (256–9) and Aeneas first senses the calamity that has befallen the city when, waking in accordance with Hector’s admonition, he hears the din of the battle, like the roar of a fire raging through a cornfield (302–5).⁵¹ At first stunned (*stupet*, 307), Aeneas moves from bewilderment to realisation (*tum vero manifesta fides, Danaumque patescunt / insidiae*, 309–10). True perception, however, is made more difficult as the fires begin to possess those who fight in their midst. The sack of the city takes place against a backdrop of flames, as the victorious deceiver stands by the emptying horse, ‘hurling flames and exulting’ (*incendia miscet / insultans*, 329–30).⁵² Echoing the real fires raging through the doomed city, metaphorical flames consume the hearts of the Greeks and Trojans involved in its fall. Cassandra’s eyes burn as she is dragged from the sanctuary of Athena’s temple (403–6), and Pyrrhus blazes with desire for bloody battle as he viciously slaughters Polites and the hapless Priam (529–30). Even Aeneas burns with battle lust (315–17). Later, in the lines that Servius says were removed by Virgil’s editors, he is fired with desire to avenge himself on Helen (575–6), and, when contemplating the hot joy that will come from destroying the woman whom he blames for the downfall of his people, he hopes that the flames of satisfied vengeance will provide recompense for the ashes of Trojan civilisation (585–7).

The intense emotions of the characters involved in Troy’s fiery downfall and the flame-filled environment through which they rage combine to convey the horror of the destruction of the city, and the flickering flames that light the last, smoke-clouded night of the doomed city become a metaphorical extension of the blazing confusion in the hearts of its desperate heroes. Aeneas relates how his own sight and comprehension were affected by the flames, recalling Venus’ offer to clarify for him the true forces behind the fall of Troy.

⁵¹ This simile, and the following comparison to the torrential clamour of a river as it devastates fields and forests (*Aen.* 2.304–8), emphasises the destruction of civilisation involved in this final battle. Cf. *Aen.* 2.496–9, where a similar comparison is drawn between the Greeks bursting into Priam’s palace and a river bursting its banks and flooding the countryside.

⁵² As R. G. Austin 1964: xiii, notes, this is a different rendition to the usual tales, which have the Greeks fire the city only as they leave it.

The goddess draws a parallel between the hero's clouded understanding and the smoke-filled environment in which he moves:

'aspice (namque omnem, quae nunc obducta tuenti
mortalis hebetat visus tibi et umida circum
caligat, nubem eripiam ...)' (*Aeneid* 2.604–6)

'Look (for I will tear away every cloud which now dulls your mortal gaze, drawn across your view, and which spreads damp obfuscation all around ...)'

Once Aeneas has perceived the divine purpose behind Troy's fall, both opposing flames and opposing warriors fall back before his advance (*dant tela locum flammaeque recedunt*, 633).

In such an uncertain environment, it is little surprise that the omen of flames around Ascanius frightens his parents and is recounted in a manner that subtly stresses ambiguity. We should note, too, that despite the fact that Anchises seems to have no doubts about the meaning of the omen, his positive reading is neither explained nor spelled out. Indeed, no explicit interpretation is offered by anyone, and considerable uncertainty about the omen's true meaning remains a distinctive feature of its representation. Even the portents that appear to confirm Anchises' belief that the gods are on his family's side (thunder on the left and the smoking passage of a shooting star) are potentially ambiguous.⁵³ In Silius Italicus' *Punica*, for example, the youthful Scipio wins followers when a comet traces across the sky and three emphatic thunderbolts signify Jupiter's support for the virtuous young Roman and the difficult path he has chosen.⁵⁴

⁵³ In Roman augury the left was the favourable side for the appearance of omens, as attested by Cicero, *de Divinatione* 2.82, quoting Ennius: *tum tonuit laevum bene tempestate serena*. As Cicero explains, however, in the Greek tradition the right side was seen as the propitious one, and the left unlucky. Roman poets use both conventions: we frequently find portents of evil on the left as, for example, when Virgil describes the menacing Sirius, to which Aeneas is compared when he appears to the Latins in Book Ten, rising on the left (*ille sitim morbosque ferens mortalibus aegris / nascitur et laevo contristat lumine caelum*, 274–5). Considerable ambiguity could thus attach to omens on the left, as is exemplified by the *numina laeva* of Virgil's *Georgics* 4.7, which, as Conington 1898, *ad loc.* details, was interpreted by ancient commentators in both a good and a bad sense. Further examples of both positive and negative omens on the left are collected by Pease 1963: 75–7, 482–3.

⁵⁴ *Punica* 15.138–48. Later, thunder on the left out of a clear sky will similarly answer Ascanius' invocation of Jupiter and accompany the arrow shot with which the young prince kills Numanus Remulus (*Aen.* 9.630–1), discussed below, pp. 160–7.

In Seneca's *Thyestes*, however, a comet from the left appears among portents signifying nature's abhorrence of Atreus' plans to sacrifice his two nephews (698–9).⁵⁵ It is despite this ambiguity that Anchises, who was said to have received the power of divination from Venus,⁵⁶ chooses to interpret the comet and thunderbolt as signs of divine interest in the survival of his family and especially his young grandson,⁵⁷ and the *monstrum* that inspired such fear in Aeneas and Creusa is revealed as a prelude not to destruction but to escape.

Anchises' startling reaction is partly explicable by the anachronistic model provided by Queen Tanaquil from the Servius Tullius legend. It can also, however, be attributed in part to the very personal perspective that seems to motivate his response, aligning him with the other characters who seek to appropriate Ascanius and the future he stands for into their own stories. Just as Andromache, for example, saw Ascanius through the lens of her own loss, Anchises sees him in the light of the divine fire of Jupiter's admonishing thunderbolt. Having so recently recalled (647–9) the flash of crippling lightning that showed the error of boasting about his liaison with Venus, the flames foremost in Anchises' mind when fire begins to lick about Ascanius' brow are connected not with the city's fate but his own. To the crippled Anchises, moreover, divine fire is significant of heavenly admonition and guidance at least as much as future disaster,⁵⁸ and in his history flames have anticipated a drastic change of conduct rather than the inexorable unfolding of doom. To Anchises, then, supernatural fire is a means by which

⁵⁵ Comets were almost always regarded as portents of evil. The comet seen in 44 BCE, after Caesar's death, and reported by Virgil, *Georgics* 1.466–8, among others, was, however, interpreted as a sign of the advent of a new golden age. On the unusual interpretation of this comet, and concomitant propagandist representations of the *sidus Iulium*, see Gurval 1997; Ramsey and Licht 1997: 135–53; Weinstock 1971: 370–84. On the comet-like nature of the flames around Ascanius' head in Book Two, see O'Hara 1996: 134–5.

⁵⁶ Ennius, *Annales* 1.15–17, on which see Skutsch 1985, *ad loc.* Further sources for the legend that Anchises was granted the gift of divination are given by Lyne 1987: 184, n. 46. Anchises' choice of words encourages recollection of his gifts: *afflare* (649) can also be used of inspiration, as in the description of the Sibyl at *Aen.* 6.50.

⁵⁷ His response seems to be endorsed by Aeneas' description of the flames as *sanctos* (686), when crafting his story of the events of Troy's fall in Carthage.

⁵⁸ Indeed, for Anchises, suffering and guidance go hand in hand, particularly if, like Teiresias and other seers of Greek and Roman myth, his bodily affliction is a necessary

Jupiter directs and shows interest in him and his family. Flames once rendered him inactive and incapable, making him think that he had forfeited his place in the world and had been relegated to a mere cipher on his family tree. Flames now play harmlessly about his grandson's forehead, which perhaps indicates to him too that Ascanius at least is not *invisus divis*. The sudden appearance of the portent while all efforts are being made to move Anchises from a fixed course of action may also suggest to him that he was wrong in his determination to stay and fall with Troy. This is a psychological moment for Anchises and the way in which his son later describes his change of mind, speaking of his defeat (*victus genitor*, 699) and his expression of submission to the gods (701), supports an interpretation of Anchises' response as being more coerced by his own conception of how the gods work to guide him than it is a marvellous product of his divinatory powers. The portent thus enforces in Anchises a renewal of hope and a change of direction and he responds, using correct augural procedure, with a question designed to test his reading of the unsolicited omen of the flames. But despite the fact that Anchises asks properly for a confirmation of the portent, he does not give an official reading of it. Rather than simply offering a heavenly sign of the future for his grandson, the omen acts on his vulnerable emotions and acts in this way because he has a particular point of view, casting some doubt on his ability to see the future as clearly as we can, who are aware of the parallels the omen draws between his grandson and Lavinia and Servius Tullius in particular.⁵⁹ Moreover, as we read on into the next book, in which Aeneas relates the first attempts of his Trojan followers to resettle after their escape from the destruction of Troy, we find that Anchises' interpretations of portents and oracles are not always to be trusted, which again qualifies our opinion of his interpretation in Book Two.

The weight of Roman tradition naturally suggests the flames licking around Ascanius' head signify a positive future, and his grandfather at least believes that the young prince will be protected

condition for his divinatory gift. For Anchises as an interpreter of divine signs, see Lyne 1987: 184, n. 46.

⁵⁹ On portents as motivating events, see R. Coleman 1982.

by the gods rather than destroyed – a belief that proves justified. The narrative itself, however, offers some encouragement both to share his parents' forebodings and, even more, to recognise that Anchises' reaction is predicated on his own perspective, as much if not more so than his access to the world of the divine. He sees what he is conditioned to see in his grandson, and perhaps also what he wants to see – the survival and future glory of his endangered family. Though we might brush it aside, the fiery portent of Book Two nonetheless reveals that Virgil's Ascanius remains a vulnerable figure despite the promises of a glorious destiny that these same flames recall. And he is vulnerable not only in a physical sense, but as a symbol. Small, under threat and an enigmatic reminder both of present danger and of potential future glories, Ascanius functions in Book Two both to draw out the confusions that necessarily attend attempts to understand the workings of destiny, and to emphasise the extreme malleability of his character as it represents the future. Though hindsight makes his survival a certainty, the threat that he might not survive remains real and poignant: his burning hair could all too easily align him with Pallas, his father's young protégé, whose hair, as noted above, is destined literally to burn on his funeral pyre (*arsurasque comas*, *Aen.* 11.77).⁶⁰ The very fact that Aeneas and Creusa fail to see their son in the way Anchises does at this moment serves to emphasise an audience's relief when it becomes possible to share Anchises' point of view and with him see Ascanius moving along the path towards Rome. But it also shows how interpretive threats continue to hover around Ascanius, attracted by the intratextual workings of the very epic to which his survival is made a necessity. A reader educated in Roman history and the trope of flames as a sign of future glory may not take the physical threat to Ascanius very seriously, and could well dismiss the hint that Rome might go up in smoke with him even before its foundation, as threatened again when the Trojan women attempt to burn the ships in Book Five. We should not fail, however, to take seriously the secondary message of the hair-burning scene at Troy. It shows Ascanius again as a sign of a glorious, regal future, but also points out that even

⁶⁰ The same suggestion is made by Reed 2007: 82.

that view of him is to some extent conditional, contingent upon wishes and expectations, and not the only way – or even the only valid way – of looking at him, and thus looking at the future, at this stage in the text. Ascanius remains vulnerable to appropriation even when his symbolism seems the most obviously positive. As we shall see in the [next chapter](#), this vulnerability retains the potential to threaten not only his life but also his promised role in his father's epic.

CHAPTER 7

PROTECTING ASCANIUS

The previous two chapters explored significant encounters between Ascanius and other characters in the *Aeneid*, each reaching towards an understanding of the future as embodied in the young Trojan prince. Each encounter came as part of an episode that charted key moments in the forward momentum of his father's plot: the decision to leave Troy; the promise of new foundations in Alba Longa and in Rome; the salvation of the burning ships that allows the Trojans to sail on to Italy. In all cases, however, forward movement was also threatened or problematic in some way, and Ascanius was closely associated with those threats. There were some hints, which we will see developed further later, that he himself might pose a problem: in Book Five he was childish and unrestrained, and brought that childishness as well as a potentially troubling Trojanness to the heart of Rome when introducing the *lusus Troiae* to Italy. Several times he was directly threatened by the forces that opposed Aeneas' destiny; and in Book Two, through implicit comparison with his stepmother Lavinia, there is a hint of a more indirect threat: that he is replaceable by the new family that has been promised to his father in Italy. The really significant threat, however, lay in the ways in which the predominantly female characters Ascanius encountered sought to appropriate him to their own visions of the future, out of tune with the promises made by Jupiter in Book One. Ascanius, I argue, is a figure who is particularly vulnerable to being claimed for alternate narratives, and who thus promotes anxiety as well as assurance about the *Aeneid*'s plot as well as making us worry about his own survival. Familial anxiety and its consequences are the theme of this chapter, as we see one potential outcome of the concern which the text engenders for Virgil's Ascanius. Our focus here is on Venus' view of Aeneas' son, her grandson, which, surprisingly, poses just as much a threat to his epic future as Andromache's vision of him as the model and replica of her dead son, Astyanax, in Book Three.

Ascanius and Cupid

Ascanius is Venus' greatest *cura*, as she says to Cupid when reading him to take the place of Aeneas' son while the young prince goes bearing gifts to the Carthaginian court:

'regius accitu cari genitoris ad urbem
Sidoniam puer ire parat, mea maxima cura,
dona ferens pelago et flammis restantia Troiae' (*Aeneid* 1.677–9)

'The princely child, my greatest concern, is getting ready to go to Dido's city in answer to his dear father's summons, bearing gifts salvaged from the sea and Troy's fires.'

These lines have long fuelled scholarly debate because the precise meaning of the noun *cura* when applied to Ascanius in this context is difficult to discern: does it denote dynastic or grandmotherly solicitude, or are there other more unsettling emotions at work?¹ Servius explains the designation of Ascanius as Venus' *maxima cura* as a reference to Ascanius' role as heir to his father's future Italian kingdom, mentioned by Mercury in Book Four.² He seems to think either that, as Aeneas' heir, Ascanius is a legitimate object of Venus' attention, or that she might be feeling anxiety about the Italian kingdom which is owed to Ascanius if Aeneas remains in Carthage, or both. Conington, on the other hand, asserts that anxiety specifically about Ascanius seems misplaced in the context, agreeing with a German contemporary that *mea maxima cura* is 'otiose ..., the plot not being intended to benefit Ascanius in any way, except so far as he is served by anything which serves Aeneas'. He goes on to wonder whether 'the removal of Ascanius to Idalia may be meant to present itself to Venus as a natural outlet for her own affection, as well as in pursuance of the plot', alluding to an understanding of *cura* as a reference

¹ The semantic range of *cura* includes anxiety, solicitude, concern, disquiet, trouble, grief, sorrow, love, attention, care, thought, administration, guardianship, command and office; it also has a number of specialised meanings when used metonymically.

² *ad Aen.* 1.678: *et Aeneas cura est, sed Ascanius maxima, 'cui regnum Italiae Romanaque tellus debentur': et ubique Ascanius maxima cura Veneris introducitur, ut 'Veneris iustissima cura'*. ('Aeneas is an object of care as well, but Ascanius is her greatest one, "to whom the kingdom of Italy and the Roman land is owed" [*Aen.* 4.275–6]. And Ascanius is introduced as Venus' greatest care everywhere, as in "the most appropriate of Venus' cares" [*Aen.* 10.132].')

to love rather than fearful concern.³ Austin dismisses such concerns and such speculation: ‘Venus speaks of the little boy as any grandmother might.’⁴ However, as Harrison notes when discussing the description of Ascanius as *Veneris iustissima cura* (‘Venus’ most proper object of care’) in Book Ten, the use of *cura* to refer to a person is often seen designating not just a loved one but a loved individual in a specifically erotic context.⁵ While *cura* can describe an individual for whom parental love is felt, it is used more often for an object of sexual love, especially by the elegists where love and pain frequently blur.⁶ Indeed, the elegists often play with the multiple meanings of the word. In Ovid’s *Heroides*, for example, Menelaus charges Helen with the ‘care’ of their Trojan guest Paris in language that unwittingly alludes to the affair that is to cause the Trojan war:⁷

omne laetatus dedit oscula ‘res’que ‘domusque
et tibi sit curae Troicus hospes’ ait. (Ovid, *Heroides* 17.159–60)

Wholly delighted he kissed me, saying ‘you should take care of our
affairs, and the house and our Trojan guest.’

Similarly, earlier in the *Aeneid*, Anchises is called the *cura* of the gods in a context that clearly alludes to his role as Venus’ love interest as well as to his status as an individual of special concern to the divine:⁸

‘coniugio, Anchisa, Veneris dignate superbo,
cura deum, bis Pergameis erepte ruinis’ (*Aeneid* 3.475–6)

³ Conington 1884, *ad loc.* His appreciation of the ambiguity of the phrase is clear as he continues: ‘The very obscurity ... may be an intentional stroke, in a speech from which everything is excluded which does not bear on the one object of persuading Cupid. But on such matters it is easy to be over-subtle.’

⁴ R. G. Austin 1971, *ad loc.*

⁵ S. J. Harrison 1990, *ad Aen.* 10.132: ‘*cura* of persons, “object of concern”, belongs to amatory language’. Horsfall 2006, *ad Aen.* 3.476 objects: ‘10.132 (a proud grandmother. Harrison is hardly right to say that *cura* thus is in origin amatory).’ Examples of *cura* as the object of desire in Augustan literature include: Propertius 2.25.1, 2.34.9; Virgil, *Eclogues* 10.22.

⁶ For *cura* of a beloved son, see Virgil, *Georgics* 4.354, though note that there is a more general erotic context to Aristaeus’ story as well.

⁷ For the text see Kenney 1996. For similar plays on the meanings of *cura* see: Propertius 2.16.2 (the return of a rival is a source of anxiety to Propertius and the cause of love-driven pain); Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 2.746 (women will be the business and subject matter of his next book, but also, the poet suggests, will be discussed as love interests).

⁸ In the description of Anchises as *superbus* there is also an allusion to the punishment he received for boasting of his affair with Venus, setting up for the double meaning of *cura* in the next line: he is Venus’ love interest, but for Jupiter he is an object of a different kind of concerned attention.

‘Anchises, deemed worthy to be the proud mate of Venus, concern of the gods, twice snatched from the ruins of Troy.’

Thus at the beginning of the epic, in a clearly erotic context, when the goddess of love talks to her son, the love god Cupid, about her plans to make Dido fall in love with her other son Aeneas, and in the process describes Ascanius, Cupid’s nephew, as her *maxima cura*, there is some justification for thinking that the amatory meaning of *cura* may be in play alongside a more innocent allusion to grandparental love or concern regarding the survival of Aeneas’ royal line. Double meanings and disguised love are clear themes in Venus’ speech in Book One as she refers to Ascanius bearing gifts (*dona ferens*, 679) like the destructive Greeks (*dona ferentis*, *Aen.* 2.49), and plots to substitute Cupid for his mortal relative and send him like a Trojan horse into Carthage, bearing fiery destruction, while Ascanius is whisked away to one of her shrines. Moreover, as this chapter demonstrates, concern about Ascanius is closely linked to an eroticised view of him throughout the epic, with potentially destructive consequences both for the viewer and for the boy himself.

We can even see the perception of Ascanius as a potential object of desire in the fires that surround him in Book Two. As noted in the [previous chapter](#), there is a gentler aspect to those flames than to the wild and threatening fires around Lavinia’s head in Book Seven. Though destructive fires menace Aeneas’ family in the last hours of Troy, in Book Two the hero goes out of his way to stress that the point of fire that poured forth illumination from Ascanius’ head was light (*levis*, 682), and the flame that licked at his hair and fed about his temples was harmless to the touch (*tactuque innoxia*, 683). The apparently innocuous and domesticated infinitives used to describe the flame’s action, pouring, licking and grazing (*fundere ... / lambere ... pasci*, 683–4), enhance the impression that, miraculously, no harm was done to the young prince, and his own harmless youthfulness is emphasised by a reference to his soft hair (*mollis / ... comas*, 683–4).⁹ The stress on the gentleness of

⁹ Cf. the similarly comforting description of the serpent that appears during Aeneas’ sacrifice to the shade of his dead father in Book Five as *innoxius* (92) and gentle in its movements (*placide*, 86). See Henry 1873–89, *ad* 2.683, on the reading of *mollis*, agreeing with *comas*, rather than *mollis* or *mollis*. R. G. Austin 1964, *ad loc.* provides support, noting that ‘the observant epithet adds to the tenderness of the picture’. For *mollis* as an adjective used to describe hair cf. Tibullus 1.8.9; Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.3.17.

the ominous flames provides reassurance, not only to Virgil's readers but also to Dido, the primary audience for the engrossing adventure story that Aeneas tells in Books Two and Three. Dido in particular may be said to stand in need of such reassurance. In Book One, as we have seen, the queen took pains to draw parallels between the history of the Trojan refugees and her own experience.¹⁰ As Virgil's reading audience is aware, there are further reasons for her to empathise strongly with the actors in Aeneas' tale, since she is in the process of falling in love with him as he speaks, helped along by the influence of Cupid, who, as Venus instructed, took Ascanius' place, embraced her and infected her with passion:

ille ubi complexu Aeneae colloque pependit
et magnum falsi implevit genitoris amorem,
reginam petit. haec oculis, haec pectore toto
haeret et interdum gremio foveat inscia Dido
insidat quantus miserae deus. (*Aeneid* 1.715–19)

When he had hung from Aeneas' neck as the hero embraced him and filled his so-called 'father' with great passion, he sought the queen. Her eyes are riveted on him, and her whole heart is caught and on occasion Dido cuddles him in her lap not knowing how great a god settles himself there to her misery.

The memory of the recent presence of the counterfeit prince in Dido's embrace as Aeneas tells the story of the child held up in the arms of his late mother, Creusa, forms another apparent bond between the hero and the Carthaginian queen, and the description of the young prince's soft hair appeals, as we will see, to her own experience of the beautiful child, further encouraging her to see herself in the place of Aeneas' wife, a role which she will adopt with enthusiasm in Book Four.

The gentle details of Aeneas' description of the portent induce Dido to become ever more deeply involved in the hero's story, furthering the narrative of their fateful liaison. But they are also a reminder of the divine machinations that are driving this romance and a sign of the destruction to be visited upon Dido. The use of the adjective *mollis*, often used to describe something tender, and

¹⁰ See above, p. 70.

worthy of love,¹¹ acknowledges and encourages the affection that Dido increasingly feels for the young Trojan and his father, as she is drawn deeper within the subtle web being spun by Venus and her divine son. In addition, *mollis* and the adjective *levis* used to describe the point of flame that appeared on the young prince's head also lend faint but discernible erotic and elegiac overtones to the scene, reminding us that it was not Ascanius but Cupid that Dido held in her arms, as both are common epithets for the god of love and desire.¹²

Indeed, fire creates a link between Ascanius and his divine cousin, as it does between Troy and Carthage, where Dido is to burn on her funeral pyre thanks to another act of Trojan treachery.¹³ Making his first appearance in Carthage, Cupid, masquerading as Ascanius, blazes with seductive youthful beauty:¹⁴

mirantur dona Aeneae, mirantur Iulum
flagrantisque dei vultus simulataque verba. (*Aeneid* 1.709–10)

They marvel at Aeneas' gifts, marvel at 'Ascanius' and the god's blazing face and counterfeit words.

This alluring fire is recalled in the description of the divine glow that surrounded Ascanius amid the fires of Troy in Book Two, his flaming hair (*crinemque flagrantem*, 685) echoing the glowing face of the god in Book One (*flagrantisque dei vultus*, 710). We recall, too, that Venus' design was to have the queen burn with love and she sends Cupid to inflame her:¹⁵

¹¹ Examples of *mollis* used to describe youthful, tender things: Virgil, *Georgics* 4.137; Lucretius, *de Rerum Natura* 5.673; Horace, *Epodes* 11.4; Martial, 6.38.8; Statius, *Thebaid* 8.594.

¹² *mollis*: *tu quoque, mollis Amor*, Ovid, *Heroides* 15.179. See also Ovid's description of Cupid appearing to him in a dream with soft hair drooping over his face (*Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.3.17). *levis*: Ovid, *Amores* 2.9.49, 3.1.41; Propertius 2.12.22. Note that *levis* generally applies to love poetry as well as to the god of love who provides inspiration for such song.

¹³ *Aen.* 5.3–4. A further connection between burning Ascanius and blazing Dido is created by the erotic victim Creusa, whose hair blazes when she puts on the poisoned robe brought to her by Medea's children (Euripides, *Medea* 1186–94). On the Trojans as betrayers and Dido's belated realisation of it, see Casali 1999.

¹⁴ On the eroticism of Dido's encounter with Amor in Book One, see Khan 2002.

¹⁵ The description of Ascanius as *dulcis* (659) gestures towards an erotic view of the young prince as well as an affectionate one, just like the designation of him as a *cura* nineteen lines later. There is also a faint echo in *donisque furem* (659) of the destructive bearing of gifts soon to be alluded to (*dona ferens*, 679), foreshadowing Ascanius' role as a honey trap.

at Cytherea novas artes, nova pectore versat
consilia, ut faciem mutatus et ora Cupido
pro dulci Ascanio veniat, donisque furentem
incendat reginam atque ossibus implicet ignem. (*Aeneid* 1.657–60)

But Venus pondered new schemes and new plans, to ensure that Cupid (altered in appearance) should come in sweet Ascanius' place, and inflame the raging queen with gifts and entwine fire around her bones.

Indeed, her incendiary plans were stressed, as she instructed Cupid to fill the queen with hidden flames and to deceive her with the poison of passion:¹⁶

'ut, cum te gremio accipiet laetissima Dido
regalis inter mensas laticemque Lyaeum,
cum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet,
occultum inspires ignem fallasque veneno.' (*Aeneid* 1.685–8)

'And the purpose of this plan is that, when Dido most joyfully receives you into her lap during the royal banquet and Dionysian drinking, when she gives you embraces and plants sweet kisses upon you, you should breathe hidden fire into her and deceive her with poison.'

These fires soon take effect: of all the Carthaginians, Dido is particularly struck by the glorious young 'prince' and the gifts he brings, and she begins to burn (*ardescit*, 713) with the flames of love that will cause her tragic end. And when Aeneas' narrative is complete, we have further evidence of the success of Venus' design, as Dido burns deep within with blind fire:¹⁷

at regina gravi iamdudum saucia cura
vulnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni. (*Aeneid* 4.1–2)

But the queen, long since wounded by severe pangs of love, nourishes the wound in her veins and is devoured by hidden fire.

¹⁶ Cf. also *Aen.* 1.673–4: 'I intend for that reason to act pre-emptively, trapping the queen with my plots and binding her with fire' (*quocirca capere ante dolis et cingere flamma / reginam meditor*). Slater 1974 notes that Cupid plays the role here of a *delicium*.

¹⁷ Note too that the first line of Book Four reintroduces the noun *cura*, in the sense of amatory distress, as a vital element in the narrative. The fires eating at (*carpitur*, 2) Dido could also be seen as a more aggressive reworking of the flame that grazes (*pasci*, 684) on Ascanius' head in Book Two. For eating flames cf. also *Aen.* 4.66.

Similar references to the fires raging within the deceived queen fill the early lines of the fourth book,¹⁸ and one in particular echoes the blazing nimbus that surrounded the child who, via his divine substitute, first inspired this baneful passion:

est mollis flamma medullas
interea et tacitum vivit sub pectore vulnus. (*Aeneid* 4.66–7)

Meanwhile a flame gnaws at her soft marrow and a silent wound lives
deep in her heart.

Here Ascanius' soft hair (*mollis* / ... *comas*, *Aen.* 2.683–4) finds an echo in Dido's soft marrow (*mollis* ... *medullas*, 66), and the gentle flame that appeared about his head is mirrored by a hidden, but deeply destructive *flamma* working as yet unseen.

The early books of the *Aeneid* hint at the eroticisation of Ascanius as Venus draws him into her deceptive world. There is no description of Ascanius' return to the epic or Cupid's departure, though the substitution made in Book One was supposed to last 'no more than one night' (*noctem non amplius unam*, 683), and Ascanius is associated with the erotic into Book Four as well.¹⁹ The consequences for Dido are devastating. For Ascanius, too, they are problematic, as he is withdrawn from the world of the epic and – being associated with the perennially childish Cupid – is doubly denied a chance at adulthood. The hangover of Cupid's erotic glamour, moreover, reaches further than Carthage. As the epic progresses and Ascanius starts to grow up, his role as a potential object of erotic desire becomes more apparent, and its consequences more disturbing. In Book Ten, in particular, it becomes clear that viewing Ascanius as an object of concern and viewing him as an erotic object are closely linked, and that both viewpoints threaten his role in the epic world.²⁰

¹⁸ E.g. *Aen.* 4.54, 101.

¹⁹ Ziogas 2010: 153–7.

²⁰ For Ovid's awareness of this thread in Virgil's representation of Ascanius, see Battistella 2010.

Jewel-Like Boys

In Book Ten, the Trojans are in crisis: Aeneas remains absent and the besieged Trojan camp has been thrown into turmoil by an attack from Turnus that almost manages to end the story differently.²¹ The book begins with a divine council, at which Venus, emphasising anxiety, again inquires about the Trojans' fate. She claims particular concern about her grandson, Ascanius, urging that she be allowed to remove him from the camp and keep him safe from battle even if his father, Aeneas, is destined to fall:

'liceat dimittere ab armis
incolumem Ascanium, liceat superesse nepotem;
Aeneas sane ignotis iactetur in undis
et quacumque viam dederit Fortuna sequatur:
hunc tegere et dirae valeam subducere pugnae.
est Amathus, est celsa mihi Paphus atque Cythera
Idaliaeque domus: positis inglorius armis
exigat hic aevum.' (*Aeneid* 10.46–53)

'You should allow me to send Ascanius away from the fighting unharmed, allow one descendant to survive. By all means let Aeneas be tossed in unknown waters and follow wherever Fortune might lay down his path: let me have the power to protect this one and remove him from the dreadful fighting. I have Amathus, and lofty Paphos, and Cythera and my home on Idaliu. Let him put weapons aside and pass his life ingloriously there.'

Venus' alleged desire to take Ascanius away from the battle to one of her shrines and her wish that he should put his weapons aside echo Numanus Remulus' recent injunction to Ascanius that the Trojans, allegedly too exotic to be good warriors, should leave fighting to others (*sinite arma viris et cedit ferro*, *Aen.* 9.620).²² As the confession that Ascanius' life in one of Venus' shrines would be unheroic (*inglorius* ... / *exigat hic aevum*, 52–3) acknowledges, such a displacement threatens to

²¹ *Aen.* 9.757–9: if Turnus had remembered to open the gates of the Trojan camp to his Italian forces, the day of his attack would have been 'the last day of the battle and of the race' (*ultimus ille dies bello gentique fuisset*, 759), a counterfactual end of the Trojans and at the same time a paradoxical end of the Romans before they had begun.

²² On Numanus Remulus and Ascanius, see further below, pp. 160–7.

strip Ascanius of any hope of *virtus* or concomitant glory.²³ A few lines later Juno underscores the threat, noting scathingly that an association with Paphus, Idalium and Cythera hardly makes fitting training for battle:²⁴

‘est Paphus Idaliumque tibi, sunt alta Cythera:
quid gravidam bellis urbem et corda aspera temptas?’ (*Aeneid* 10.86–7)
‘You have Paphus, and Idalium and lofty Cythera: why are you messing
around with a city heavy with war and the hard-hearted?’

Suggesting that war lies outside Venus’ rightful province,²⁵ Juno sounds aggressively like Numanus Remulus, killed in the previous book during Ascanius’ first and possibly only active engagement in battle.²⁶ Although Venus would not agree with Juno’s conclusions, she too, as we have seen, has already suggested that her shrines are places of retreat, unsuited to those involved in war. Indeed, Venus implied this once before, when talking in Book One of her plans for Ascanius while Cupid takes his place in Carthage:

‘hunc ego sopitum somno super alta Cythera
aut super Idalium sacrata sede recondam,
ne qua scire dolos mediusve occurrere possit.’ (*Aeneid* 1.680–2)
‘I will bury him away, lulled by sleep, in a sacred shrine up on high
Cythera or the mountain city Idalium, so he can’t find out about my tricks
or get in the way.’

Though not so overt as her description of Ascanius’ potential future life in one of these shrines as *inglorius*, this earlier passage also makes clear the un-epic nature of such displacement. Using the verb *recondere* to express her intention to plant Ascanius in safe obscurity, Venus reworks the most famous verb of the epic,

²³ The naming of Idalium as one of those shrines may also evoke Mt. Ida, which as Seo has shown is associated with youth and beginnings for Trojan heroes (Seo 2013: 61–2), underlining the retrograde nature of this removal for Ascanius’ epic career.

²⁴ On the problem of ‘un-epic’ elements in Latin epic, see Hinds 2000; Pavlock 1992.

²⁵ Her choice of adjective *gravidus* (87), for the Latins’ war-torn city, literally ‘pregnant’, suggests on the other hand that war is in her province. Similar suggestions that Aphrodite is not suited to war are made at *Iliad* 5.349–51, 428–30.

²⁶ Juno’s reference to the shrine on ‘high Cythera’ (*alta Cythera*, 86) echoes Venus’ *celsa Paphus atque Cythera* (51) and *alta Cythera* (*Aen.* 1.680) but also evokes Numanus Remulus’ reference to *alta / Dindyma* (*Aen.* 9.617–18) as an appropriate place of retirement for the unwarlike Trojans.

condere, which looks both to the foundation of Aeneas' new city and the Roman race and to the final act in the *Aeneid* that allows that foundation, the burying of Aeneas' sword in Turnus' chest.²⁷ Here, Ascanius' epic journey takes a sharp about face, as the prefix *re-* sends him in backwards, away from his father's destined Western kingdom and away from the path to adulthood on which he is placed. Both Venus' *maxima cura* and (should he get the chance to act like an epic hero) a threat to her deceitful plan (682),²⁸ Ascanius is relegated to a new abode (*sede*, 681) that is both sacred and a burial place for heroic hopes, far from any possibility of being in the centre of the action (*ne ... mediussve occurrere possit*, 682).²⁹

When such a fate is threatened again for Ascanius, after he has gone through the initiatory moment of making his first kill in battle, and when the removal appears to be permanent this time, appreciation of the consequences of such displacement become acute. Though Venus does not seem to have been serious,³⁰ instead using the threatened truncation of her grandson's career in an attempt to manipulate Jupiter into moving the plot along and vouchsafing the Trojans' victory, Ascanius' close association with the goddess and her erotic sphere, and in particular his former interchangeability with Cupid, make it possible that such a fate might befall him. When the council of the gods ends with Jupiter refusing to take sides and the epic returns to the action, and we see the besieged Trojans on the walls of their camp, the realisation that Ascanius might not properly belong in a warrior epic is further strengthened. Almost immediately, Ascanius comes into view. Surrounded by his beleaguered compatriots as they fight to repel the Italian attack, the young prince is compared to a sparkling jewel, set in a golden ornament, and to ivory gleaming, inlaid in precious wood:

hi iaculis, illi certant defendere saxis
molirique ignem nervoque aptare sagittas.

²⁷ On *condere* in the *Aeneid* see James 1995.

²⁸ Cf. Dido, perceived as a similar threat at *Aen.* 1.674.

²⁹ For *sedes* denoting a tomb, see *OLD sedes* 6.a.

³⁰ This is probably, as S. J. Harrison 1990, *ad* 51–2 notes, 'an exaggerated *miseratio*' rather than a genuine desire. Note, however, that she attempted a very similar removal of her grown-up warrior son Aeneas from the battlefield at Troy in *Iliad* 5.314–18.

ipse inter medios, Veneris iustissima cura,
 Dardanius caput, ecce, puer detectus honestum,
 qualis gemma micat, fulvum quae dividit aurum,
 aut collo decus aut capiti, vel quale per artem
 inclusum buxo aut Oricia terebintho
 lucet ebur; fusos cervix cui lactea crinis
 accipit et molli subnectens circulus auro.
 te quoque magnanimae viderunt, Ismare, gentes
 vulnera derigere et calamos armare veneno,
 Maeonia generose domo, ubi pinguis culta
 exercentque viri Pactolusque inrigat auro. (*Aeneid* 10.130–42)

Some strive to defend the walls with javelins, some with stones, and to heave fire, and fit arrows to the bowstring. He himself is in the middle of them, Venus' most rightful care, a Trojan boy, behold! his handsome head uncovered: he is like a jewel that shines in a setting of tawny gold, adornment for a neck or a head, or like ivory that gleams, inlaid in boxwood or Orician terebinth; his milk-white neck is a platter for his flowing hair and a circlet of soft gold surrounds it. The great-hearted nations saw you as well, Ismarus, dealing out wounds and arming your darts with poison, high-born offspring of a Maeonian home, where men work the rich fields and the Pactolus waters them with gold.

The pointed description of Ascanius here as *Veneris iustissima cura* (132) reminds us both of Venus' description of Ascanius as *mea maxima cura* in Book One and of her recent plea to be allowed to remove her grandson to safety. The great dangers he faces in the midst of the siege are thus highlighted, while it is also suggested that – as Venus' most rightful concern – he may not be fitted for a place at the forefront of battle. Exactly what he is doing at the forefront of the battle, moreover, is unclear, and there are no verbs in the main narrative to tell us.³¹ He has recently been directed by Apollo to refrain from the war (*cetera parce, puer, bello*, *Aen.* 9.656), so should not really be there on the walls at all. The ivory and gold in the simile may hint at disobedience to this divine command as well as the danger he faces.³² The prince is helmetless (*detectus*,

³¹ The only verbs are either in the simile, describing the jewel sparkling (*gemma micat*, 134) and the ivory gleaming (*lucet ebur*, 137) or, after the simile, describing how Ascanius' neck 'receives' (*accipit*, 138) his flowing hair.

³² These precious materials are often associated with deception and the destruction of heroes. On the deceptiveness of ivory, see Elsner 1991: 162–4; Hexter 1990: 123–4. On gold, and the heroic lust for gold, as an agent of destruction, see Boyle 1986: 141.

133), but this need not mean that he is not still bearing arms in the Trojan defence: while an epic hero can doff his helmet as a sign of truce, as Aeneas does in Book Twelve (311–12), he can equally appear unhelmeted in the heat and thick of battle, like Statius' Parthenopaeus (*Thebaid* 9.699–703). Ascanius' helmetless state thus further underlines his vulnerability.³³ It reminds us in particular of his attempt to calm the maddened Trojan women in Book Five and, through the use of the participle *detectus*, evokes Venus' recent expressed desire to protect him (*hunc tegere ... valeam*, 50). It offers no resolution, however, to the question of what he was doing on the walls of the Trojan camp. Ascanius is in this moment perfectly poised between action and inaction, in a way which mirrors two of the potential fates in store for him: continued involvement in the narrative and a chance to mature into an epic hero, or relegation to the care of his grandmother, and a life of ignominious retirement.

Rather than resolve the issue, the passage is insistent that we focus our gaze on Ascanius as an object,³⁴ and on the similes in particular which, paradoxically, both constitute a narrative pause and contain more action (or at least, more verbs) than their narrative frame.³⁵ Virgil's description of him, like a gem sparkling in a golden band, like gleaming ivory inlaid in exotic wood, his hair held in place by a circlet of gold, circles back, however, to the problem at hand, reminding us of the previous association between the prince and the precious, in Book One, where Cupid took Ascanius' place to bring gifts for Dido at

³³ Aeneas, helmetless in Book Twelve, is soon grievously wounded, Statius' Parthenopaeus dies. Cf. the vulnerable troops of Tacitus, *Annals* 13.38, who have put aside armour and helmets in the guise of peace, and are thus made vulnerable to attack despite their great numbers.

³⁴ The presentation of the similes marks an ekphrastic moment in Virgil's larger *descriptio* of the battle scene: see Rogerson 2002. Ascanius' visual presence is triply emphasised by Virgil's exhortation to the reader to look (*ecce*, 133) at him, by his comparison of Ascanius to two artefacts which sparkle (*micat*, 134) and gleam (*luet*, 137), and by his implication that he was seen by the great-hearted peoples who also saw Ismarus defending the walls of the camp (*te quoque magnanimae viderunt, Ismare, gentes*, 139). Feeney 1999 notes that 'the precious and beautiful head of Aeneas' son, on which so much depends, commands our aesthetic attention in the middle of the chaos' (182).

³⁵ On narrative pause, see D. P. Fowler 1991. On ekphrasis and simile, see in particular Becker 1995: 41–50; Lonsdale 1990. On epic similes, see Hornsby 1970; Lyne 1989: 63–99; Moulton 1977; Nimis 1987; D. West 1969.

Aeneas' behest.³⁶ His Tyrian audience marvelled at him and at the gifts (*mirantur dona Aeneae, mirantur Iulum*, 709). Dido, too, was moved equally by the boy as by the gifts he carried (*pariter puero donisque movetur*, 714). This double reaction draws clear parallels between Aeneas' highly valued son and the exquisite treasures salvaged from Troy during its collapse, while, as we have seen, Dido's response in particular (*ardescit*, 713) hints at the erotic nature of this fateful meeting.³⁷

The attraction of Ascanius' jewel-like gleaming in Book Ten is enhanced by recollection of other, slightly more mature heroes whose looks, embellished by divine agency, made them comparable to valuable artefacts. In particular, Cupid and Ascanius look like Aeneas earlier in Book One, imbued with shining charisma by Venus:³⁸

restitit Aeneas claraque in luce refulsit
os umerosque deo similis; namque ipsa decoram
caesariem nato genetrix lumenque iuventae
purpureum et laetos oculis adflarat honores:
quale manus addunt ebori decus, aut ubi flavo
argentum Pariusve lapis circumdatur auro. (*Aeneid* 1.588–93)

Aeneas stood there, dazzling in the clear light, like a god in his face and shoulders; for the goddess mother herself, with her divine breath, had bestowed comely hair upon her son, and the brilliant light of youth and joyful glories for his eyes: just so the hands of a craftsman give beauty to ivory, or when silver or Parian marble is surrounded by flaxen gold.

The comparison of the dazzling (*refulsit*, 588) Aeneas to a highly crafted work of ivory and to gold inset with beautiful stone creates a clear link between this famous passage from Book One and the descriptions both of Cupid in the same book and Ascanius in Book Ten, where similar colour contrasts appear and precious materials are again used to describe the boy's beauty.

³⁶ Being enjoined to look (*ecce*, 133) at the young prince and his shining, golden head also reminds us of the flames around his head that riveted attention in Book Two, declaring a glorious future and at the same time highlighting danger.

³⁷ The comparison also highlights Ascanius' problematic Trojanness: on the Trojan association of artefacts and the question of how much they might contaminate the Roman world into which Aeneas is moving, see Seo 2013: 63–4.

³⁸ Aeneas is an echo of Odysseus, embellished by Athena (*Odyssey* 6.232–5, 23.159–62). These heroes are the inverse of those lifelike statues that are frequently the subject of epigram. On the erotics of the gaze in ancient epic, see most recently Lovatt 2013: 262–309.

Indeed, there are multiple links between Book One and the description of Ascanius in Book Ten, all of which serve to enhance the sexual charge of the description of him on the walls of the Trojan camp. The simile in Book Ten also looks back to the description of Ascanius whisked away to Venus' shrine in Book One, in ways which further highlight the anti-epic consequences of such a view of the young hero:

at Venus Ascanio placidam per membra quietem
inrigat et fotum gremio dea tollit in altos
Idaliae lucos, ubi mollis amaracus illum
floribus et dulci adspirans complectitur umbra. (*Aeneid* 1.691–4)

But Venus pours peaceful rest through Ascanius' limbs, and the goddess lifts him, nestled in her lap, to Idalium's lofty groves, where soft marjoram twines him round with flowers, and shadows wreath round him breathing sweetness.

The eroticism of this image is clearly evident as Venus nestles the child in her lap (*fotum gremio*, 692), just as Dido is not many lines later to nestle the love god Cupid (*gremio fovet*, 718),³⁹ and as he is embraced (*complectitur*, 694) by flowers and shade.⁴⁰ The soft marjoram (*mollis amaracus*, 693) is echoed in the soft gold in Ascanius' hair in Book Ten (*molli ... auro*, 138) and in the soft hair that burned with harmless flames in Book Two (*mollis ... comas*, 683–4), while Venus pouring (*inrigat*, 692) sleep into Ascanius is recalled in the Pactolus pouring (*inrigat*, 142) gold into the rich fields in the lines immediately after the description of the jewel-like Ascanius in Book Ten.⁴¹ Here, too, the ways in which such a destination acts as an epic terminus are subtly stressed. The scene ends with shadows (*umbra*, 694), a significant indicator of closure both in the *Aeneid* and in Virgil's *Eclogues*.⁴² Moreover, when the goddess raises Ascanius to the high groves of Idalium (*in*

³⁹ Also noted by Seo 2013: 63, who compares the Ganymede ekphrasis in Book Five as well. There is, in addition, an echo here of Juno's accusation that the love goddess Venus has fostered war inappropriately (*fovine Cupidine bella*, *Aen.* 10.93): see further Seo 2013: 58.

⁴⁰ See Butler 2010 for the erotics of *amaracus* and this scene in general.

⁴¹ The only other use of the verb in the *Aeneid* is, like that in Book One, metaphorical, as sleep is poured into the limbs of the weary Trojans (*Aen.* 3.511).

⁴² On the clausal nature of shade and shadow in the *Aeneid* and the Virgilian corpus, see Theodorakopoulos 1997.

altos / Idaliae lucos, 692–3), she not only fulfils her own repeated expressions of desire to remove him from danger, but also both echoes and frustrates the upwards momentum of the epic, in which Jupiter promises an end in the stars (*famam qui terminet astris*, *Aen.* 1.287) and, recently, Apollo has promised a similar end for Ascanius (*sic itur ad astra*, *Aen.* 9.641). Raised to Venus' shrine, Ascanius is removed from the limitless world foretold by Jupiter and placed in an enclosed space (*complectitur*, 694). This enclosure, moreover, is echoed again in the similes in Book Ten, where he is compared to a jewel surrounded by gold (*gemma ... fulvum quae dividit aurum*, 134) and ivory inset (*inclusum*, 136) in wood. Such translocation not only threatens Ascanius' nascent adulthood but also the epic destiny he was promised, just as the removal of Lavinia by her concerned mother in Book Seven threatens her role in the action while also emphasising her role as an object of erotic desire.⁴³

Furthering perception of Ascanius' erotic, un-epic presence at the camp in Book Ten, we can note the strong similarities between Virgil's description of the young prince in the midst of the siege and the young men of elegy and epigram.⁴⁴ Propertius' elegy to Paetus, a young man who died at sea, offers an example:

nunc tulit et Paetus stridorem audire procellae
et duro teneras laedere fune manus;
nec thyio thalamo aut Oricia terebintho
effultum est pluma versicolore caput (Propertius 3.7.47–50)

Paetus now also endures hearing the shrieking of the gale and hurts his tender hands on the hard rope, and his head is not pillowed on multicoloured down in a Dionysian bedchamber, or Orician terebinth.

⁴³ The eroticisation of Lavinia, particularly with reference to her blush (*Aen.* 12.64–71), is further discussed by Dyson 1999; D. P. Fowler 1987; Lyne 1983; Todd 1980. On the hiding away of Lavinia, see Cairns 1989: 157–8. On the desire to protect and enclose the beloved cf. Catullus 62.39–47. Compare also the protection of the eroticised Achilles, poised in an ambiguous position between childhood and adulthood, in Statius' *Achilleid*, on which see Rosati 1992: 236–41. Statius' young Achilles is also beautiful, with his beauty described by use of colour contrast evocative of the descriptions of Ascanius in the *Aeneid*: a fiery light shines in his snow-white face, and his radiant (*purpureus*) hair gleams with gold (*Achilleid* 1.161–2).

⁴⁴ On the elegiac nature of Ascanius in the second half of the *Aeneid*, see Ziogas 2010: 162–71.

This passage contains the only other Latin mention of terebinth from Oricia – the dark exotic wood that contrasts with the gleaming ivory in Virgil's second simile describing Ascanius on the walls of the Trojan camp.⁴⁵ The multicoloured feathers, on which Paetus' head should have been laid to rest if he hadn't been caught in a deadly storm, contrast with the black water that soon closes over him,⁴⁶ mirroring Virgil's simile, where Ascanius' attractiveness is thrown into relief by the darker battle scenes around him.⁴⁷ The correspondence between Virgil's Ascanius in Book Ten and Propertius' lost Paetus emphasises both the young Trojan's erotic beauty and his vulnerability, fostering the belief that he should not be facing such peril.⁴⁸

These themes are repeated in the erotic twelfth book of the Palatine Anthology, where we find the closest extant parallel to Virgil's presentation of Ascanius as a sparkling jewel in a poem by Asclepiades describing two young men, who complement each other more perfectly than emerald and gold, or ebony and ivory:⁴⁹

εὔρεν Ἔρως τι καλῶ μείζαι καλόν, οὐχὶ μάραγδον
 χρυσῶ, ἃ μὴτ' ἀνθει μήτε γένοιτ' ἐν ἴσῳ, ἃ
 οὐδ' ἐλέφαντ' ἐβένῳ, λευκῶ μέλαν, ἀλλὰ Κλέανδρον
 Εὐβιότῳ, πειθοῦς ἄνθεα καὶ φιλίης. (Asclepiades, *Anth. Pal.* 12.163)

Eros has found one thing of beauty to mix with another, not emerald with gold – that would not bloom so brilliantly, it would not match up – and not ivory with ebony, black with white, but Kleander with Eubiotos, the blooming flower of persuasion and friendship.

Here the contrast of ebony and ivory, of black and white, gives erotic pleasure, suggesting that Virgil's Ascanius, with his gold adornments in contrast to his milky-white skin, evokes similar

⁴⁵ Heyworth and Morwood 2011, ad Propertius 3.7.49–50.

⁴⁶ *moribunda niger clauderet ora liquor*, Propertius 3.7.56. See also Robertson 1969.

⁴⁷ See further S. J. Harrison 1991, ad *Aen.* 10.134–5.

⁴⁸ The idea that Ascanius does not belong in epic is enhanced by this elegiac parallel. On elegy's persistent *recusatio* of epic and the military, see Kennedy 1992: 46–63.

⁴⁹ The poem's focus on aesthetics is discussed by Sens 2011: 154–6, whose text I use here. See also Meleager's variation on Asclepiades' theme (*Anth. Pal.* 12.165), where the poet puns on his own name in speaking of two youths whose contrasting complexions, of white and honey, increase his desire for them both. Further on Hellenistic epigram, see Garrison 1978; Hutchinson 1988. On the eroticism associated with crafted objects in the Hellenistic period, see B. H. Fowler 1989. On the moral significance of jewellery in the Roman world, see Dalby 2000; Stout 1994.

desire.⁵⁰ The fact that Ascanius in the *Aeneid* is pointedly said to be without his helmet, so that we can see his hair flowing over his shoulders, enhances the suggestion of his sexual allure, further highlighting how incongruous his presence is among the hard-pressed Trojan warriors.⁵¹

From these comparisons one might conclude that Juno, Numanus Remulus and Venus were right about Ascanius: he doesn't belong in the epic world. We remember that there are plenty of beautiful young people who do belong (or at least fight) in epic, but this is hardly reassuring: as Virgil's readers know well, beautiful young heroes die, and death itself is eroticised throughout the *Aeneid*.⁵² Indeed, it is not unusual for young warriors to inspire their viewers' desire, as well as respect for their prowess, and appreciative regard for their youth.⁵³ In the ninth book of the *Thebaid*, where Parthenopaeus appears without his helmet in the midst of battle, he draws all eyes with the sweet shining of his hair and face; he is praised for his beauty, though he vehemently dislikes such attention; so perfectly, in fact, does he embody the ideal of attractive youthful heroism that even the enemy forces stand aside.⁵⁴ Similarly the young Pallas in Book Eight, doomed to die at the hands of Turnus, is seen and admired shining like Venus' favourite star as he accompanies Aeneas on his return to the besieged camp.⁵⁵ And likewise, the doomed Penthesilea, her helmet removed after her death, proved seductive even to Achilles,

⁵⁰ Compare also the most famous example of erotic colour contrast in the *Aeneid*, where Lavinia's blush in Book Twelve is compared to ivory stained with red dye or white lilies mixed with roses (67–9), evoking deadly passion in Turnus who is looking on (70–1).

⁵¹ Compare Strato, *Anth. Pal.* 12.217, addressed to a young man urged not to go off to battle and hide his head in a helmet. Also on the allure of unhelmeted young heroes, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.24–36: with his helmet on, Minos is handsome (*in galea formosus erat*, 26), but when he takes it off, he drives Scylla out of her mind (*vix sua, vix sanae virgo Niseia compos / mentis erat*, 35–6). See further Kenney 2011, *ad loc.*

⁵² D. P. Fowler 1987; Reed 2007: 16–43. Seo 2013: 63 is reluctant to push her observations of the eroticisation of Ascanius to their conclusion: 'Iulus/Ascanius cannot be too homoeroticized as an ephebe: in Vergil's epic, ephebic allure can be lethal.'

⁵³ For this phenomenon in the *Iliad*, see Monsacré 1984: 63–77.

⁵⁴ Statius, *Thebaid* 9.704–6. The erotics of Statius' presentation of Parthenopaeus are discussed by Jamset 2004; Lovatt 2005: 67–71; Seo 2013: 130–41, with a particular focus on his hair.

⁵⁵ *Aen.* 8.587–91. On Pallas and the erotic, see Putnam 1985. Here we must also compare the starry Marcellus of Horace's *Odes* 1.12.45–8.

that most implacable of enemies.⁵⁶ For Ascanius, object of the gaze of the battling peoples below (*magnanimae viderunt ... gentes*, 139), whose ability equally to engage in and to survive the battle is already of concern, these are not positive signs.

Among these doomed, beautiful young heroes, the Amazon Penthesilea, depicted on the frieze on Juno's temple in Carthage in Book One, is particularly reminiscent of Ascanius in Book Ten:⁵⁷

ducit Amazonidum lunatis agmina peltis
Penthesilea furens mediisque in milibus ardet,
aurea subnectens exsertae cingula mammae
bellatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo. (*Aeneid* 1.490–3)

Penthesilea, raging, leads the battle line of the Amazons with their crescent shields, and she blazes in the middle of the soldiers, a warrior maiden with a gold circlet around her bared breasts, and – though a maid – she dares to enter battle against men.

Like Ascanius, Penthesilea is seen in the middle of the fight, gleaming with light, and with a golden band around her body.⁵⁸ She is fighting fiercely, though not endowed with *virtus*, which might suggest that Ascanius need not be precluded from the man's world of epic, though Penthesilea's death raises further questions about whether he would survive such an immersion.

This problem is underlined by the description of another doomed, female warrior, Camilla, who appears at the end of the catalogue of Italian warriors in Book Seven, her hair bound about with gold:

illam omnis tectis agrisque effusa iuventus
turbaque miratur matrum et prospectat euntem,
attonitis inhians animis, ut regius ostro
velet honos levis umeros, ut fibula crinem
auro internectat, Lyciam ut gerat ipsa pharetram
et pastorem praefixa cuspide myrtum. (*Aeneid* 7.812–17)

⁵⁶ Propertius 3.11.13–16.

⁵⁷ On Penthesilea, see Boyd 1992: 224–6. Note also that the frieze immobilises Aeneas with amazement (*Aen.* 1.494–5), as Penthesilea is said in the legend to immobilise Achilles with her beauty, and as Ascanius stunned his viewers in Book One (709).

⁵⁸ *Penthesilea furens mediisque in milibus ardet*, / *aurea subnectens* (*Aen.* 1.491–2) is recalled by Ascanius *inter medios* (*Aen.* 10.132) and *molli subnectens circulus auro* (*Aen.* 10.138).

All the young men who flood from the houses and the fields marvel at her, as does the throng of matrons, and they watch her as she goes along, gaping, their spirits amazed at how the regal adornment drapes her smooth shoulders with purple, how the pin interweaves her hair with gold, how she carries a Lycian quiver and a staff of farmland myrtle affixed with a spear point.

The amazement that Camilla evokes in her spectators (*miratur*, 813; *attonitis ... animis*, 814) evokes the similar wonder inspired by Cupid-Ascanius in Book One, while her physical description is clearly reminiscent of the depiction of Ascanius in Book Ten.⁵⁹ Camilla, too, is soon to die, raising still further doubts about the likelihood of Ascanius' survival.

A different edge is also given to these concerns by another description of doomed warriors, the Gauls who are embossed on Aeneas' shield in Book Eight, menacingly creeping up on the Capitol.⁶⁰ Like Ascanius, they shine with a golden light, gleaming prominently through the dark night; they wear golden torques about their milk-white necks; and they are all the more eye-catching because of the contrasting colours that mark their presence – the gold against their creamy skin, their exotic striped cloaks:⁶¹

Galli per dumos aderant arcemque tenebant
defensi tenebris et dono noctis opacae:
aurea caesaries ollis atque aurea vestis,
virgatis lucent sagulis, tum lactea colla
auro innectuntur (*Aeneid* 8.657–61)

The Gauls were coming through the underbrush and occupied the citadel under the cover of darkness and thanks to the murky night. They had

⁵⁹ *fibula crinem / auro internectat* (*Aen.* 7.815–16) in the description of Camilla is echoed in that of Ascanius: *fusus cervix cui lactea crinis / accipit et molli subnectens circulus auro* (*Aen.* 10.137–8). On Camilla in the catalogue and her connection to Penthesilea, see Boyd 1992. Further connections between Camilla and Ascanius are hinted at in Book Eleven, where we learn about the protective instincts that made her father encase her in wood (*subere clausam*, 554) and tie her to a spear to save her from danger, to which compare Ascanius in the simile in Book Ten (*inclusum buxo*, 136).

⁶⁰ On the strong visual emphasis in this passage, see Hardie 1986: 120–5.

⁶¹ The connections between these Gauls and Ascanius in Book Ten are emphasised by repetition of vocabulary in both passages: *aurea caesaries ollis atque aurea vestis, / virgatis lucent sagulis, tum lactea colla / auro innectuntur* (*Aen.* 8.659–61) is echoed in *lucent ebur; / fusos cervix cui lactea crinis / accipit et molli subnectens circulus auro* (*Aen.* 10.137–8).

golden hair and golden clothes, they gleam in their striped cloaks, and then their milk-white necks are encircled with gold.

Each of these parallels suggests Ascanius' beauty and that his involvement in war is a potential menace not just to his enemies but also to himself. They also underscore his exotic, potentially dangerous otherness, again raising the issue of whether he might be too Trojan for a rightful place in Virgil's Roman epic. Penthesilea is a well-known enemy of civilisation. Camilla is not only a woman but doubly an outsider as the child of an exile, as well as being 'marked by her garb as a harbinger of doom for the Italian cause'.⁶² Moreover, Camilla can be viewed as an appendix to the mini-epic provided by the Italian catalogue in Book Seven, which mirrors the opening and close of the *Aeneid* by beginning with *primus ... ab oris* (647) and ending with an act of foundation (*conditur*, 802). She is thus also 'outside' the epic in a meta-literary sense, being relegated to a position beyond the end of the mirror within the text that the catalogue provides. The Gauls are outsiders who break their way in, with disastrous results that almost end in the complete annihilation of Rome. Thus all of these warriors are in some way external to Virgil's epic, a threat to the civilised foundation it promised. All these comparisons suggest not only that it is impossible to be certain about what Ascanius is doing on the walls of the besieged camp, but also that, paradoxically, his role within the epic is marginal. He is a vulnerable figure, and his vulnerability threatens the future, but he is also potentially dangerous, and that threatens the future too.

Ascanius' extreme beauty in Book Ten marks him not only as his heroic father's son,⁶³ but as a character perhaps too beautiful to belong to the epic world, or too beautiful to survive it. Death or the denial of epic adulthood are the two destinies his youth seems to promise, both clearly at odds with the future prophesied by Jupiter in Book One. The fact that he seems such an appropriate figure to be incorporated into Venus' erotic world shows not only, again, his vulnerability, but also the tendentiousness of the

⁶² Boyd 1992: 221.

⁶³ Heroes are conventionally good looking, though Aeneas' looks are left largely to the imagination: Griffith 1985.

narrative imposed upon him by Venus' father, and calls that apparently rock-solid prediction of the future into question. This tension between epic expectations and Ascanius' youthful nature is further heightened as the character's own hopes for an epic future drive him into the action. The [next chapter](#) explores the consequences of Ascanius' desire not to be held back.

CHAPTER 8

GROWING UP

While Venus wants to keep him out of danger, Ascanius himself displays a tendency to plunge into it.¹ In Carthage, once – we assume – his substitution by Cupid has been reversed, he joins his father and Dido on the fateful hunt that will provide the opportunity for their union; but he has hopes of fiercer prey than that which he will find:

at puer Ascanius mediis in vallibus acri
gaudet equo iamque hos cursu, iam praeterit illos,
spumantemque dari pecora inter inertia votis
optat aprum, aut fulvum descendere monte leonem. (*Aeneid* 4.156–9)

But the boy Ascanius rides joyfully on his fierce steed in the middle of the valleys, and passes now one group, now another in his speedy course. He wishes for a foaming boar to be the answer to his prayers amid the sluggish flocks, or for a tawny lion to come down from the mountain.

In Roman thought such desire for adventure is characteristic of boys on the verge of adulthood.² Horace, for example, compares Augustus' stepson Drusus to a young eagle driven from the nest by his youth and innate energy into the unknown world of heroic toil (*olim iuventas et patrius vigor / nido laborum protulit inscium*, *Odes* 4.4.5–6), learning to fly, hunting sheep and then graduating to snakes, driven by love both of food and of combat (*egit amor dapis atque pugnae*, 12).³ While such instincts are seen as natural, and laudable, as the young Romans – and the young animals that represent them – grow up to fulfil their proper roles as warriors and citizens, there is also a clearly acknowledged possibility that love of combat might prove dangerous, even deadly,

¹ The desire of children to grow up in ancient epic is also treated by Pratt 2007: 34–8, discussing Achilles in the *Iliad*.

² Golden 1990: 10.

³ Text from Putnam 1986.

if unrestrained.⁴ Augustus provides the necessary moderating force to keep the young Drusus and his brother Tiberius in line in Horace's poem.⁵ The *Aeneid*, as we shall see, offers other, more drastic, interventions to curb Ascanius' youthful exuberance. This chapter examines moments of apparent initiation into adulthood for Ascanius in the second half of the *Aeneid*, which seem to allow him to move towards the mature future promised by Jupiter in Book One, but which also hint at dire consequences if he is not held back and which, eventually, postpone his coming of age to an unspecified moment beyond the boundaries of the text.

We have already seen Ascanius maturing during the *lusus Troiae* in Book Five, which functions as a prelude for his and his companions' future roles as warriors.⁶ Aeneas' instruction that the Troy games should begin prepares us for the way in which this convoluted equestrian exercise allows boys to play the part of men:

at pater Aeneas nondum certamine misso
custodem ad sese comitemque impubis Iuli
Epytiden vocat et fidam sic fatur ad aurem:
'vade age et Ascanio, si iam puerile paratum
agmen habet secum cursusque instruxit equorum,
ducat avo turmas et sese ostendat in armis
dic' ait. (*Aeneid* 5.545–51)

But the games are not over yet, and father Aeneas calls Epytides to him, the guard and companion of beardless Ascanius, and speaking thus into his trusted ear, said: 'Go and tell Ascanius that, if he has his boyish troop ready now and present, and has planned the horses' routes, that he should lead the squadrons in honour of his grandfather and display himself in arms.'

The descriptions of Aeneas as father (*pater*, 545) and Ascanius as a beardless (*impubis*, 546) youth in charge of a boyish (*puerile*, 548) troop underline their relative statuses as hero and child. At the same time, Ascanius is in command of a troop (*agmen*, 549) and charged with drawing up (*instruxit*, 549) the strategy for their ritual performance, marking him as a child on his way towards heroic manhood. Wearing garlands (*corona*, 556) and twisted gold torques

⁴ Silius Italicus, for example, describes *amor pugnae* as as *insanus* (*Punica* 6.335) and *pestiferus* (*Punica* 9.37).

⁵ *Odes* 4.4.27–8, 33–4.

⁶ Glei 1997: 309.

(*flexilis obtorti per collum circulus auri*, 559) and carrying spears and quivers of arrows (557–8), the young Trojans are instantly recognisable as participants in an initiation ritual.⁷ This impression is enhanced by the description of the manoeuvres in which they are engaged as dances in designated groups (*diductis ... choris*, 581), evoking the ephebic choruses of ancient Greece,⁸ and further strengthened both by references to the ways in which the boys resemble their ancestors, and by mention of the families they themselves are to found.⁹ There is some suggestion that this counterfeit of battle (*pugnaeque ... simulacra*, 585) might prove dangerous, even terminal, in the simile comparing the motions of the *lusus Troiae* to the windings of the Cretan labyrinth (588–91), which casts the young Trojans as potential sacrifices to the monster within.¹⁰ The general tenor of the episode, however, is positive: it is later moments of initiation that bring the dangers of moving into the world of adulthood more clearly to light.

Silvia's Stag

In Book Seven, Allecto is sent by Juno to foment discord between the Trojans and Italians. She infects first Amata (341–405), then Turnus (406–74) with her blazing rage, and finally turns her attentions to Ascanius, who is out hunting with his dogs:

dum Turnus Rutulos animis audacibus implet,
 Allecto in Teucros Stygiis se concitat alis,
 arte nova, speculata locum, quo litore pulcher
 insidiis cursuque feras agitabat Iulus.
 hic subitam canibus rabiem Cocytia virgo
 obicit et noto naris contingit odore,

⁷ On the *lusus Troiae* as an initiation, see Prescendi 2010: 81. Carrying bows and also being armed with two spears makes the boys look like Paris, similarly armed at *Iliad* 3.17–18, a clearly ephebic figure: Vidal-Naquet 1986b: 130.

⁸ Hanink 2007. Hanink further argues that the similes of the labyrinth (588–91) and the dolphins (594–5) used to describe the *lusus Troiae* also suggest its choral nature and thus underline its function as a spectacle of social order. For sea creatures as choruses, see *Aen.* 5.240, 823.

⁹ Ancestors: 564, 576. Future families: 565, 568. On these themes, see the discussion above, pp. 78–86.

¹⁰ Miller 2003: 75. Armstrong 2002: 335 reads the simile more positively, with Ascanius as a Theseus figure, leading the young Trojans safely out of the labyrinth.

ut cervum arduentes agerent; quae prima laborum
causa fuit belloque animos accendit agrestis. (*Aeneid* 7.475–82)

While Turnus fills the Rutulians with daring spirits, Allecto spurs herself on to attack the Trojans on hellish wings, and with fresh tactics she spied out the place on the shore where handsome Ascanius was harrassing wild beasts with traps and chasing them. Here the underworld maiden imparted sudden madness into the dogs, and touched their nostrils with a known scent, so that they blazed with desire to chase a deer: this was the first cause of the long struggles to come and inflamed the hearts of the countrymen for war.

The hounds flush and give chase to a special stag, the pet of Silvia, the daughter of Latinus' gamekeeper. Fired with desire for glory, Ascanius shoots the stag with a divinely directed and resounding arrow:

ipse etiam eximiae laudis succensus amore
Ascanius curvo derexit spicula cornu;
nec dextrae erranti deus afuit, actaque multo
perque uterum sonitu perque ilia venit harundo. (*Aeneid* 7.496–9)

Ascanius himself, moreover, on fire with love of exceeding praise, shot a dart from his curved bow; and a god was there to guide his hand on target, and the driven arrow passed with much noise through the animal's belly and through its flank.

The wounded stag retreats, and a little over twenty lines later battle lines are drawn (*derexere acies*, 523) and the war is begun.

Allecto's infection of Ascanius' hounds with bloodlust is emphatically marked as the beginning of internecine strife in Italy (*quae prima laborum / causa fuit belloque animos accendit agrestis*, 481–2), a significant moment in the Trojans' troubled progress towards Rome.¹¹ The episode is often seen as a sign that the martial demands of epic are about to corrupt, indeed to destroy, the peaceful, pastoral world of pre-Trojan Italy.¹² The stag, half-wild and half-tame, itself paradoxically embodies these oppositions between civilisation and savagery,¹³ and the rite of passage inherent in Ascanius' shooting of the

¹¹ For interest in the causes of war in contemporary Roman literature, see Horace, *Odes* 2.1.1–4, with Nisbet and Hubbard 1978, *ad* line 2 on this theme in the historiographical tradition.

¹² Putnam 1998: 97–118; Mack 1999; Nelis 2001: 301.

¹³ Vance 1981.

stag is another paradox:¹⁴ both an act of violence that breeds more violence and a deed which can be seen as paving the way for Augustus' eventual imposition of peace in Italy and the inauguration of a new Golden Age. There are clear parallels between Ascanius' wounding of the stag and his father's killing of Turnus at the end of the epic,¹⁵ and the stag is one of a number of deer killed or wounded during the course of the *Aeneid* and presented as victims of the Trojans' fateful trajectory.¹⁶ Aeneas' negligent metaphorical wounding of the love-struck Dido in Book Four is a particularly close parallel:¹⁷

urit^r infelix Dido totaque vagatur
 urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta,
 quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit
 pastor agens telis liquitque volatile ferrum
 nescius: illa fuga silvas saltusque peragrat
 Dictaeos; haeret lateri letalis harundo. (*Aeneid* 4.68–73)

Unhappy Dido burns, and wanders raging through the whole city, like a deer with an arrow shot into it, which a shepherd pierced from far off in Cretan groves though it had not expected it and the shepherd was unaware of what he had done as he hunted with his weapons and left the flying iron behind: the deer wanders in flight through the woods and marshes of Crete; the deadly reed clings in its side.

The burning Dido here closely recalls the inflamed Ascanius from Book Seven, and both look to the blazing Cupid-Ascanius whose erotic presence was so destructive in Carthage.¹⁸ Moreover, comparison between the two passages is encouraged by the way in which Allecto's use of new arts to inflame Ascanius' hounds in Book Seven (*arte nova*, 477) echoes Venus' adoption of new arts to ensnare Dido in Book One (*novas artes*, 657),¹⁹ and the incident of Silvia's stag is thus clearly marked as one of a series of stag

¹⁴ On the wounding of Silvia's stag as a rite of passage for Ascanius, see Wagner 1995: 124–34. On hunting and war in the *Aeneid*, see further Davis 1968; Dunkle 1973.

¹⁵ Lyne 1987: 193–306; Moskalew 1982: 136–83, esp. 166–8; Putnam 1998: 118; Nelis 2001: 293–5.

¹⁶ Boyle 1986: 124–6.

¹⁷ On the eroticism of the wounding of the stag in Book Seven, see Ziogas 2010: 162–5.

¹⁸ See above, pp. 71–3.

¹⁹ On the interconnections between Allecto and Venus, see further Lyne 1987: 18–20. Echoes of the events in Carthage are further enhanced if, like Nelis 2001, we read a

deaths that portend serious trouble not only for the Trojans' enemies and victims but for the Trojans themselves and their Roman descendants.²⁰

There are also similarities between Ascanius in Book Seven and the unrestrained warriors of the second half of the *Aeneid*. Inflamed by love of glory (*eximiae laudis succensus amore*, 496), Ascanius resembles Euryalus in Book Nine (*magno laudum percussus amore*, 197), whose similar love of glory and youthful lack of self-control lead to his downfall. He is also reminiscent of Aeneas at the end of the epic, once he has succumbed wholeheartedly to *ira*, pursuing the wounded Turnus like a keen hound chasing a wounded stag.²¹

nec minus Aeneas, quamquam tardata sagitta
interdum genua impediunt cursumque recusant,
insequitur trepidique pedem pede fervidus urget:
inclusum veluti si quando flumine nactus
cervum aut puniceae saeptum formidine pinnae
venator cursu canis et latratibus instat;
ille autem insidiis et ripa territus alta
mille fugit refugitque vias, at vividus Umber
haeret hians, iam iamque tenet similisque tenenti
increpuit malis morsuque elusus inani est. (*Aeneid* 12.746–55)

No less did Aeneas pursue him, though the arrow slowed him down and his knees meanwhile hindered him and made a swift pace impossible, and pressed close upon the anxious Turnus' heels in a blazing frenzy: just as when a hunting hound comes upon a stag hemmed in by a river or trapped by the fearful snare of crimson feathers, and presses upon it with a swift pace and barking; the stag, terrified by the traps and high river bank, flees and flees again down a thousand paths, but the keen Umbrian hound sticks close, gaping, and now, now almost grips it, and snaps its jaws as if it was gripping it, and its empty maw is frustrated.

hint of the archer god Cupid in the helpful *deus* (identity unspecified) guiding Ascanius' arrow in Book Seven (498), remembering that in Book Four 'the departure of Amor for Olympus and the return of the real Ascanius is not described' (295, n. 129).

²⁰ Also compare Aeneas' hunting and killing of seven stags when the Trojans first land in Carthage (*Aen.* 1.187–93).

²¹ The stag's flight back and forth through a thousand paths (*mille fugit refugitque vias*, 753) in this simile recalls the labyrinth to which the *lusus Troiae* was compared in Book Five (*mille viis habuisse dolum*, 590), increasing our sympathy for Turnus as well as fostering the suspicion that rites of passage do not always go well for the young. On Turnus' youthfulness in the *Aeneid*, see Reed 2007: 44–72.

Aeneas' blazing pursuit (*fervidus*, 748) here aligns him with Turnus, whose fieriness is a feature of Book Twelve in particular,²² and looks forward at the same time to the final scene of the *Aeneid* where he is again *fervidus* (951) as he plunges his sword into Turnus' chest. While such ferocity demonstrates valour and prowess, it is also a terrifying sign of destruction, as we have seen already in the fires of Troy in Book Two, and as the description of a fiery Aeneas in Book Ten also reminds us.²³ When the hunting Ascanius and his inflamed hounds in Book Seven remind us of the frighteningly out-of-control Aeneas, it suggests that Ascanius' initiation into manhood may involve becoming too like his father for comfort, and be marked by an abandonment of the restraint that is supposed to curb the deadly, aggressive ambitions of the young.

For many readers of the *Aeneid*, such concerns are mitigated by a strong sense that Ascanius is not to blame for what happens in Book Seven. Scholars argue that it was his hounds and not Ascanius that Allecto infected, that Allecto also directed the arrow he shot, that there was nothing wrong with his actions in moral or legal terms, and that there is no firm authorial indication that Ascanius was at fault, keeping our sympathies equally divided between the Trojans and the Italians without alienating us from either side.²⁴ Such arguments have a long history: a defence of Ascanius' actions on the grounds of his ignorance of the fact that the stag was tame was imagined by Virgil's fourth-century CE commentator Tiberius Claudius Donatus.²⁵ This debate speaks to the deliberate ambiguities of the outbreak of war in Book Seven, where it is consistently difficult to apportion blame, and indeed to distinguish one side from the other.²⁶ It is even difficult to draw clear distinctions between Ascanius and the stag he wounds: both wander without guidance in the woods,

²² Tarrant 2012, *ad Aen.* 12.3.

²³ *Aen.* 10.270–5, where the belching flames around Aeneas' helmet are an ominous sign of impending doom for the watching Italians, rather than, as with Ascanius' flames in Book Two, pointing to the hero's survival and future glory. Cf. Achilles at *Iliad* 18.205–6 and 22.25–31; Diomedes, *Iliad* 5.4–7.

²⁴ W. S. Anderson 1969: 68–9; Griffin 1985: 171; Lyne 1987: 200; Vance 1981: 133.

²⁵ Donatus, 2.75.24–76.6 *Georgii*. See further Starr 1992.

²⁶ Horsfall 1987: 49; Feeney 1991: 172; Nelis 2001: 300.

brandishing *cornua*,²⁷ and the parallels between Ascanius and his father suggest that, like the stag, Ascanius too is partly civilised and partly wild.

Such ambiguity makes discomfort with the episode natural, and aligns it even more closely with the notoriously problematic end of the *Aeneid*, where readers similarly discuss whom to blame, and where there are also significant similarities between the hero and his victim. Anxiety thus is made an important aspect of this initiatory moment, where the boundaries between human and animal as well as between child and man are blurred, and initiation has potentially fatal consequences not only for the hunted animal but also for the young hunter and his people, both present and future. Compounding such concerns is the discomfort evident in many responses to Virgil's statement that the wounding of the stag in Book Seven was the first cause of the war that was to fill the second half of the *Aeneid* (481–2). To many, the incident seems a trivial cause for such serious events,²⁸ and the fifth-century CE writer Macrobius judged it lightweight, excessively childish and ultimately unconvincing, a view he suggests Virgil shared:²⁹

cervum fortuito saucium fecit causam tumultus. sed ubi vidit hoc leve nimisque puerile, dolorem auxit agrestium, ut impetus eorum sufficeret ad bellum. (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.17.2)

He made the chance wounding of a stag the cause of the explosion of violence. But when he realised that this was flimsy, and too childish, he increased the grief of the country folk, so the attack on them might be sufficient reason to go to war.

For Macrobius, the episode proves Virgil's difficulties in following in Homer's footsteps, and he compares the wounding of the stag unfavourably with the wrath of Achilles as a likely cause of

²⁷ Wandering: 491, 493 (stag); 498 (Ascanius). Horns: 488 (stag), 497 (Ascanius). See further Putnam 1998: 116–18, who also notes similarities between the protected, decorated, pastoral stag and Camilla, a link strengthened by the parallels that can be drawn between the depiction of Camilla and that of the decorative Ascanius in Book Ten, discussed above, pp. 141–3.

²⁸ W. S. Anderson 1969: 68; Griffin 1985: 170–2.

²⁹ For the text see Willis 1994. Here *impetus eorum* is ambiguous, mirroring the ambiguity concerning whom to blame for the outbreak of war discussed above. I have translated

great conflict.³⁰ The criticism continues with a sarcastic synopsis of the plot of Book Seven that makes clear Macrobius' disapproval of the use of Juno, Allecto and a maddened Amata as catalysts for the outbreak of hostilities.³¹ The lack of logic and of control, which Macrobius finds troubling, however, are precisely the themes that Virgil highlights in his narration of the beginning of the war. Indeed, these themes and their close connection to the childishness which Ascanius represents are emphasised in the simile describing another of Allecto's victims, Amata, as she rages throughout her husband's city:

ceu quondam torto volitans sub verbere turbo,
quem pueri magno in gyro vacua atria circum
intenti ludo exercent, ille actus habena
curvatis fertur spatiis; stupeat inscia supra
impubesque manus mirata volubile buxum;
dant animos plagae: non cursu segnior illo
per medias urbes agitur populosque ferocis. (*Aeneid* 7.378–84)

Like when a top spins beneath the twisted lash, which boys drive on in a great revolution around an empty hall, all attention on their game, driven by the strap it is carried in curved trajectories; the unknowing, immature group wonders at it from above, marvelling at the flying boxwood; their blows give it life: her pace was no slower as she was driven through the middle of the city and its fierce peoples.

Here, as in the description of Ascanius shooting Silvia's stag, the children's actions are implicated in harm they neither intend nor understand. They are playing (*intenti ludo exercent*, 380), like the Trojan youth engaged in the *lusus Troiae* in Book Five and like Ascanius earlier in Book Seven, providing the solution to the table-eating prophecy with a joke (*adludens*, 117), but their play is violent, described in language seen elsewhere in contexts of military aggression.³² The emphasis on their unknowingness (*inscia*, 381) aligns them to Aeneas unwittingly wounding Dido in Book Four (*nescius*, 72), while the close connection between childishness and

eorum as an objective genitive ('the attack on them') but it could also be subjective ('the attack made by them').

³⁰ Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.17.1.

³¹ *Saturnalia* 5.17.3–4.

³² Note in particular their 'band' (*manus*, 382), like an armed force, and the aggression implicit in *exercent* (380) and *intenti* (380).

unwitting, serious harm prepares for Ascanius' involvement in the start of the war. The children are also closely associated with the idea of a lack of control, here symbolised by the top spinning in circles in the empty hall (*vacua atria circum*, 379), its destiny ominously foreshadowed by the evocation of the empty halls through which Pyrrhus chased Polites in Book Two (*vacua atria lustra / saucius*, 528–9). The fact that the top is made of boxwood (*volubile buxum*, 382) also links Amata to the childish Ascanius, represented as a boxwood work of art in Book Ten (136) and associated with boxwood instruments in Book Nine (619), in the only two other references to the material in the *Aeneid*. Again, then, Ascanius' adaptability is stressed: he shares qualities both with the aggressor and with the victim. Moreover, the simile emphasises the potential deadly consequences of his unwitting (and partial) rite of passage in Book Seven. War – allegedly the purview of men – becomes consequent on the action of a child, and the more disturbing for that fact.

Nisus and Euryalus

The next initiatory moment for Ascanius comes in Book Nine. In Book Eight, as in Book Six, he was left behind while his father went travelling and was shown Rome's great future. There, as Aeneas moved forward, his son waited for news of his father and of the developing situation (*nuntia ventura Ascanio rerumque patrisque*, *Aen.* 8.550). This news was brought by a band of warriors not outstanding enough in *virtus* to be chosen to attend the hero, and who moved sluggishly down the river (*fertur aqua segnisque ... defluit*, 549) in stark contrast to Aeneas' swift voyage upstream, hinting at Ascanius' continued dissociation from adulthood as the business of war moved closer.³³ In Book Nine, however, Ascanius steps forward to assume leadership in his father's absence. Aeneas had left his youthful Trojans to the guardianship of Mnestheus and Serestus:

instat Mnestheus acerque Serestus,
quos pater Aeneas, si quando adversa vocarent,
rectores iuvenum et rerum dedit esse magistros. (*Aeneid* 9.171–3)

³³ *contra* Andersson 1976: 91 and Petrini 1997: 101, who see Aeneas' journey as a move back in time to a more innocent age.

Mnestheus and fierce Serestus pressed on with the attack, whom father Aeneas had left as mentors for the young and in charge of the situation if at some point adverse events should call for intervention.

However, although left behind under the direction of these adult heroes, Ascanius nonetheless performs the role of leader during his father's absence, and is present at the conclave of Trojan captains in debate about their proper course of action. He is the first to greet Nisus and Euryalus when they come to make their fateful suggestion that they should leave the camp that night to find Aeneas and bring him back, and he authoritatively orders Nisus to speak (232–3).³⁴ He is instrumental in sending Nisus and Euryalus out on their abortive mission, making promises to them on his father's behalf, and later takes part in the battle himself, dispatching the Italian Numanus Remulus with a divinely guided bowshot from the camp's wall.

But Ascanius' adulthood is not as easily won as this synopsis suggests. As in Book Five, where he attempted to bring the Trojan women to their senses, his assumption of adult responsibilities is dubious. His reception of Nisus and Euryalus' offer to go out and bring Aeneas back indicates his ongoing immaturity. The aged Trojan Aletes interprets Nisus and Euryalus' plan as a sign that the gods do not intend totally to destroy the Trojans (246–50).³⁵ Weeping, he promises the pair great rewards: divine approval, consciousness of virtue and tangible gifts from Aeneas and his son Ascanius, their peer, who will never forget their great service (*integer aevi / Ascanius meriti tanti non immemor umquam*, 255–6). Ascanius immediately breaks in (*excipit*, 258) with a long speech elaborating on this theme, his eagerness to qualify

³⁴ Ascanius' eagerness to greet Nisus and Euryalus may demonstrate the juvenile impatience he betrays later in Book Nine, when he has to be restrained from disregarding Apollo's warning not to re-enter the battle. See below, pp. 163–7. Generally on the Nisus and Euryalus episode in Book Nine, see Casali 2004; Duckworth 1967; D. P. Fowler 2000; Egan 1980.

³⁵ Hardie 1994 notes *ad loc.* that Aletes' renewed faith in the gods' support is reminiscent of Anchises' response to the omen that answered his request for confirmation of the ominous flames surrounding Ascanius' head in Book Two (702–3). The parallel further emphasises the bond between Ascanius and Euryalus that will be stressed later in Book Nine, as well as hinting that Aletes' interpretation of the situation might, as Anchises' had frequently proved, be flawed. A reader concerned about Ascanius' future and aware

and expand on Aletes' suggestion captured in his emphatic first word, *immo*:

'immo ego vos, cui sola salus genitore reducto,'
excipit Ascanius 'per magnos, Nise, penates
Assaracique Larem et canae penetralia Vestae
obtestor: quaecumque mihi fortuna fidesque est,
in vestris pono gremiis. revocate parentem,
reddite conspectum: nihil illo triste recepto.' (*Aeneid* 9.257–62)

'Yes absolutely,' continued Ascanius, 'I swear to you, Nisus, by the great Penates, and by the tutelary gods of Assaracus and the inner hearth of white Vesta, I to whom you are the only salvation while my father is away, whatever luck and faith I have I place in your laps. Call my father back, return him to our sight: getting him back will ensure that nothing turns out unhappily.'

Then he offers extravagant rewards.³⁶ First he lists objects already in the Trojans' possession: a pair of silver drinking cups won by Aeneas at Arisba (263–4), two tripods, two talents of gold and an ancient bowl that was a gift from Dido (265–6). Next he offers gifts only possible if the beleaguered Trojans win the war in Italy, claiming that he will set aside Turnus' horse and armour from the spoils as a reward for Nisus (269–71), while promising that his father will give him twelve carefully chosen concubines and twelve male captives,³⁷ each with his own armour (272–3), and the entirety of Latinus' royal domain as well (274). Finally, to Euryalus, his coeval, he promises his constant devotion and *fides* (275–80).

Among several Homeric sources for this passage, the closest is the catalogue of compensatory gifts offered to Achilles by Agamemnon in *Iliad* 9,³⁸ signalling that this episode too might result in failure and a tragic loss of young life. Nisus and Euryalus are clearly modelled on Achilles and Patroclus,³⁹ and Ascanius,

of Nisus and Euryalus' fatal destiny might also read this echo as suggestive support to the more negative readings of the omen in Book Two discussed above, pp. 110–22.

³⁶ 'Because he is young', according to Highet 1972: 144; 'with the generosity of a child', Heinze 1993: 129. Further on the troubling extravagance of the gifts Ascanius offers and the varying interpretations of this scene see Casali 2004: 329–33.

³⁷ Or six concubines and six male captives: as Hardie 1994 notes *ad* 272–3, the precise application of *bis sex* is unclear.

³⁸ Hardie 1994, *ad* 263–74.

³⁹ In particular, the promise of lasting fame after their deaths in Book Nine (446–9) evokes Achilles' Iliadic preference for glory over life, while its hermeneutic instability,

like Agamemnon, is misguided. The details of his offer suggest danger and disaster to come: Dido's bowl recalls the queen's enmity towards the Trojans and her final curse, apparently being fulfilled in Book Nine, that they should again be troubled by war, with Aeneas separated from his son and forced to seek external aid.⁴⁰ The reference to the desirability of Turnus' armour is also a grimly prophetic reminder of the many young warriors doomed to die in the final books of the *Aeneid* because of their desire for such spoils, including Euryalus, Camilla and the heroic Turnus himself.⁴¹

Ascanius' speech thus suggests both childish excess and an imperfect understanding of how to act and what to say as an heroic adult. Moreover, the impression of immaturity is fostered by the opening lines of his speech, where he acknowledges his need for succour in his father's absence (*sola salus genitore reducto*, 257), and speaks of his longing for Aeneas' return (*revocate parentem, / reddite conspectum: nihil illo triste recepto*, 261–2). His status as a child is also underlined in Euryalus' answer, requesting that the young prince take care of his elderly mother should any disaster befall him (283–92). This request acts as a reminder that the roles of protector and dependent are reversed when children grow up, as Ascanius has yet to do, and brings to mind specifically the demonstrations of familial piety by both Aeneas and Anchises at Troy's fall. Euryalus ensures that we think of Troy, first by describing his mother as a member of the family of Priam (*genetrix Priami de gente*, 284) and then by dwelling on how she accompanied him on his journeys, refusing to be left behind in Troy (*miseram tenuit non Ilia tellus / mecum excedentem*, 285–6). His speech moves the Trojans to tears, and Ascanius is particularly affected:

percussa mente dedere
Dardanidae lacrimas, ante omnis pulcher Iulus,
atque animum patriae strinxit pietatis imago. (*Aeneid* 9.292–4)

discussed by D. P. Fowler 2000: 103–4, also hints at the change of opinion Achilles later expressed in the *Odyssey*.

⁴⁰ *Aen.* 4.615–18.

⁴¹ Euryalus: *Aen.* 9.359–66, 373–4; Camilla: *Aen.* 11.778–84; Turnus: *Aen.* 12.941–4. On the dangers associated with gift-giving elsewhere in the *Aeneid*, see Frangoulidis 1992.

The Trojans shed tears, their imaginations struck by his words, and so too did, more than all of the rest, handsome Ascanius, and the evocation of father-son *pietas* pained his spirit.

A parent and son refusing to be separated and leaving Troy together brings his own family's escape from Troy to mind, and the ambiguity implicit in *patria pietas*, which can denote *pietas* towards a father as well as that displayed by a father,⁴² evokes not only the reciprocal *pietas* between Anchises and Aeneas, but also Aeneas' *pietas* towards his son and finally Ascanius' *pietas* towards his father, a *pietas* he cannot properly display until he reaches adulthood. This aspect of *patria pietas* is brought out clearly in Book Ten, where Aeneas, watching Lausus die for Mezentius' sake, is similarly reminded of paternal *pietas*:⁴³

et mentem patriae subiit pietatis imago. (*Aeneid* 10.824)

And memory of father-son *pietas* came clearly to mind.

The prefiguration of Lausus' death in Euryalus' departure to try to find Aeneas gestures towards Euryalus' impending doom, but also subtly underlines Ascanius' relative childishness compared to both Euryalus and Lausus, even as he starts to assert his autonomy.⁴⁴

This childishness is again underlined when Ascanius swears to fulfil Euryalus' request by his own head, by which his father used to swear (*per caput hoc iuro, per quod pater ante solebat*, 300). Ascanius suggests here that he is taking his father's place, and echoes his father in saying that his promise to cherish Euryalus' mother will remain in force after her son's return (*manebunt*, 302).⁴⁵ He also shows a certain amount of tact in refraining from mentioning the fact that Euryalus might not return.⁴⁶ However, it

⁴² Hardie 1994: *ad Aen.* 9.294.

⁴³ The naming of Aeneas as Anchises' son (*Anchisiades*, *Aen.* 10.822) points clearly to the parallel Aeneas sees between Lausus' actions and his own.

⁴⁴ Conington 1883, *ad Aen.* 9.294 hints at Ascanius' immaturity, suggesting that Ascanius is not as deeply moved as his father was to be by the recollection of *patria pietas*: "'Strinxit," crossed, a metaphor from grazing a thing lightly (5.163), as we should say, flashed across his mind.'

⁴⁵ See Hardie 1994, *ad loc.* for the allusion to Aeneas promising Nisus and Euryalus that they will not be stripped of their prizes in the foot race in Book Five (*manent*, 349).

⁴⁶ Noted by Servius, *ad Aen.* 9.301: 'he keeps quiet about a possible bad outcome and leaves it to be inferred and read between the lines' (*tacet adversa et magis intellectui et subauditioni relinquit*).

is nonetheless clear from his oath that he is not yet a man despite his attempts to adopt his father's role. The reaction of ancient writers to his statement demonstrates its discordant strangeness. Apuleius suggests that it will be useless for Ascanius to swear by himself in Italy, where no one knows him.⁴⁷ Servius worries about the implications of Ascanius' claim that Aeneas used 'in the past' (*ante*, 300) to swear by his son's head.⁴⁸ While there is a sense in the ancient world that an oath sworn on one's own life is more genuine and more reliable than an oath sworn on the life of another,⁴⁹ the statement is more resonant of Ascanius' desire to appear grown up than of his assumption of adulthood. In swearing by his own life, he plays the role of both the father and the child, and, by pointing this out and appealing to the authority of the absent Aeneas in the process, he inevitably reminds us that he is not fully mature, despite a desire to adopt adult responsibilities.⁵⁰

Ascanius' liminal status between child and adult is made clear in Virgil's account of his farewell to the two Trojans:

protinus armati incedunt; quos omnis euntis
primorum manus ad portas, iuvenumque senumque,
prosequitur votis. nec non et pulcher Iulus,
ante annos animumque gerens curamque virilem,
multa patri mandata dabat portanda: sed aurae
omnia discerpunt et nubibus inrita donant. (*Aeneid* 9.308–13)

The armed men set off forthwith; and the whole band of the most important Trojans in the camp escorted them prayerfully as they went to the gates, young men and old men alike. Nor was handsome Ascanius absent: he assumed a spirit and manly cares beyond his years, and he kept giving them many messages to convey to his father. The breezes, however, snatched them all away and conveyed them vainly to the clouds.

While the description of the young prince showing a mind beyond his years and coping with adult concerns (*ante annos animumque curamque virilem*, 311) suggests a swift and premature maturity

⁴⁷ *de Deo Socratis* 5.

⁴⁸ *ad Aen.* 9.300, mentioning three possible interpretations: (1) Aeneas 'previously' swore by Ascanius' life but is now absent; (2) Ascanius is self-consciously and properly modelling his behaviour on his father's; (3) Aeneas no longer swears by Ascanius' life because he is a *pontifex* and priests should swear only by the gods, not by their children.

⁴⁹ Juvenal, *Satires* 6.16–17; Justinian, *Digest* 12.2.3.4.

⁵⁰ Further on the childishness of this oath, see Seo 2013: 137–8.

and casts him as a *puer senex*,⁵¹ it also gives rise to further doubt about Ascanius' apparent maturity. The statement that Ascanius was adopting (*gerens*, 311) adulthood suggests that he might simply have been acting the part of a man,⁵² and thus that his apparent manliness will prove a façade, much like the warrior guise he adopted in Book Five during the *lusus Troiae*. The many messages for his father that he kept giving to Nisus and Euryalus (*multa ... mandata dabat*, 312) hint further at his ongoing reliance on Aeneas,⁵³ and the emphasis on their futility (312–13) underlines his powerlessness. Indeed, it is soon demonstrated that Ascanius' attempt to bear (or carry off) a manly role in sending Nisus and Euryalus out in search of his father was unsuccessful. His support of Nisus and Euryalus' expedition, in direct contravention of Aeneas' orders that no one was to leave the camp in his absence (41–3), proves disastrous. As Nisus and Euryalus' story comes to an unsatisfactory close and the tearful prince hustles Euryalus' grieving mother out of sight (501–2),⁵⁴ we are still left wondering whether the young prince ever will be able to grow up successfully.

Numanus Remulus

In Ascanius' next appearance in Book Nine the tension surrounding his achievement of adulthood is exacerbated. The episode, Ascanius' killing of the Italian Numanus Remulus, is introduced with a promise of initiation, declaring that Ascanius, who had previously confined his aggressive attentions to hunting, was about to make his first kill in battle:

tum primum bello celerem intendisse sagittam
dicitur ante feras solitus terrere fugacis

⁵¹ The abnormal maturity that allows Ascanius to bear *cura virilis* was also suggested in his earlier address to his coeval Euryalus as *venerande puer* (276). The *puer senex* topos, used in praise of extraordinary children, is discussed by Golden 1990; Hardie 1994, *ad Aen.* 9.311; Hemelrijk 1999: 60; McCarthy 1931, who discusses how the theme was applied to the young Octavian.

⁵² For this meaning of *gerere*, see e.g. Valerius Maximus 9.1.9, and Cicero, *de Officiis* 1.115.

⁵³ The change of tense from the present *prosequitur* (310) to imperfect *dabat* (312) hints at anxious repetition in his charges to the two Trojans to take these missives to his father.

⁵⁴ On the denial of closure at the end of the Nisus and Euryalus episode, see Fowler 2000: 108.

Ascanius, fortemque manu fudisse Numanum,
cui Remulo cognomen erat, Turnique minorem
germanam nuper thalamo sociatus habebat. (*Aeneid* 9.590–4)

Then it was, they say, that Ascanius first aimed a swift arrow in war. He was previously accustomed to terrorising fleeing animals, but he laid low with his own hand brave Numanus, whose *cognomen* was Remulus: he had recently become a member of Turnus' family, by marrying his younger sister.

Again, this passage promises initiation, and several scholars have believed it to be a successful one.⁵⁵ This is not surprising. The introductory *tum primum* (590) marks the episode as (another) new beginning for Ascanius and his movement from hunting to warfare mirrors the initiation of young males into adult society throughout the Greek and Roman world.⁵⁶ We are even reminded that hunting was seen as a training ground for battle by Numanus Remulus, Ascanius' victim:

'venatu invigilant pueri silvasque fatigant,
flectere ludus equos et spicula tendere cornu.
at patiens operum parvoque adsueta iuventus
aut rastris terram domat aut quatit oppida bello.' (*Aeneid* 9.605–8)

'The boys spend all night hunting and wear out the woods, in games they direct their horses and aim arrows from the bow. But our youth suffers toil and is accustomed to scarcity and subdues the ground with ploughing, or strikes at the trembling towns in war.'

Numanus scornfully declares that the Trojans should leave warfare to real men (*sinite arma viris et cedit ferro*, 620) and suggests that they have no place in this epic of arms and a man (*arma virumque*, *Aen.* 1.1), an issue of particular relevance to the childish and exquisite Ascanius.⁵⁷ Ascanius, however, responds with a curt and emphatic assertion of his *virtus*, spoken at the same moment that his arrow pierces the Italian's skull:⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Petrini 1997: 101; Wagner 1995: 143–53.

⁵⁶ On initiation in the *Aeneid*, see Wagner 1995. On initiation in ancient Greece and Greek literature, see Rubin and Sale 1983; Vidal-Naquet 1986a, 1986b.

⁵⁷ Numanus' slur that the Trojans spend their time playing boxwood instruments in worship of a goddess (619) echoes the description of Ascanius as a boxwood artefact in Book Ten, as noted above, p. 154, making his accusations of Trojan effeminacy and unsuitability for war particularly pointed.

⁵⁸ Ascanius' *bis capti Phryges* responds directly to Numanus' at 599, while the speaking nature of his bowshot (*sonat ... fatifer arcus*, 631) marks the deed as much as the words

‘i, verbis virtutem include superbis!
his capti Phryges haec Rutulis responsa remittunt.’ (*Aeneid* 9.634–5)

‘Get out! Go on, pretend you’re a man with arrogant words. The “twice-captured Trojans” send this reply to the Rutulians.’

The god Apollo, watching from the clouds, comments approvingly on Ascanius’ new *virtus* and suggests that he is moving on from his Trojan past:

‘macte nova virtute, puer: sic itur ad astra,
dis genite et geniture deos. iure omnia bella
gente sub Assaraci fato ventura resident,
nec te Troia capit.’ (*Aeneid* 9.641–4)

‘Rejoice in your new manliness, child: that’s the way to reach the stars. You are born from the gods and will father gods too. Rightly will all wars to come be settled by the race destined to arise from the line of Assaracus: Troy does not hold you back.’

The suggestion that Ascanius is moving on to adulthood, transcending his past, continues as Apollo descends from the heavens in disguise and addresses the young prince by the patronymic *Aenide* (653), the first and only time in Virgil’s epic that Ascanius is given this honorific title, which suggests that he finally has become worthy of being called his father’s son.⁵⁹

While this seems a clear indication that the young prince has proved, finally, that he can act as a man, several aspects of the episode undermine such confidence. The use of *dicatur* (591) to describe Ascanius’ first kill in battle marks the moment as a significant one in Ascanius’ personal history but also introduces an element of uncertainty to the tale, suggesting that it is a tradition that perhaps cannot be trusted. The story itself is not fantastic, or (compared to the rest of the narrative) in the distant past,⁶⁰ which makes the use of *dicatur* difficult to explain. The reference to tradition might allude to stories that Ascanius gained the name

as an answer to Numanus’ accusations: Paschalis 1997: 315. The divinely supported and resounding arrow in Book Nine (630–4) closely echoes the arrow guided by a god that shrieked its way into Silvia’s stag in Book Seven (498–9), linking these two initiatory passages closely.

⁵⁹ R. E. Coleman 1942–3: 146.

⁶⁰ Hardie 1994, *ad Aen.* 9.591.

Iulus from his first engagement in war,⁶¹ but it could also be introduced to cast some doubt over the initiation towards which the episode gestures. Repeated reference to Ascanius as a *puer* strengthens such suspicions. Juxtaposed to *virtus* in Apollo's first celebration of apparent adulthood (*macte nova virtute, puer*, 641), the designation of the young hero as a child makes it clear that he has not completed the journey to manliness, despite his new *virtus*.⁶²

This theme is further underlined when Apollo advises the boy (*puer*, 656) to be satisfied with his achievement and engage no further in battle.⁶³

atque his ardentem dictis adfatur Iulum:
'sit satis, Aenide, telis impune Numanum
oppetisse tuis; primam hanc tibi magnus Apollo
concedit laudem et paribus non invidet armis:
cetera parce, puer, bello.' (*Aeneid* 9.652–6)

And in these words he addressed the burning Ascanius: 'Let it be enough, son of Aeneas, that you have encountered Numanus under arms and escaped unscathed. Great Apollo allows you this first instance of praise and does not begrudge you a share in his own weapons: refrain from the battle from here on, child.'

Rather than a true initiation, then, this episode is a 'flirtation with adulthood',⁶⁴ the latest in a string of moments in the *Aeneid* where Ascanius is promised maturity but denied it. One explanation for this final instance of a pattern of partial initiations is that Ascanius, like Telemachus in the *Odyssey*, is denied adulthood so that he does not come into direct competition with his father.⁶⁵ Aeneas' absence in Book Nine allows Ascanius a chance to act, as it does for a number of other heroes including Turnus, but the book also

⁶¹ See Casali 2009: 307, and above, pp. 52–4.

⁶² O'Hara 1996: 107 notes that Virgil twice juxtaposes *virtus* and *puer*: compare also Aeneas' injunction to Ascanius to learn *virtus* from him in Book Twelve (*disce, puer, virtutem ex me*, 435), where again Ascanius' liminal position between childhood and adulthood is implied. The theme is further stressed in the passage to which Aeneas' last address to his son alludes: Andromache's inquiry in Book Three about the boy Ascanius (*puer*, 339; *puero*, 341) and his manly ambitions (*antiquam virtutem animosque virilis*, 342). On these two scenes, see further pp. 57–62, 183–9.

⁶³ On the troubling and surprising nature of this intervention, see Casali 2009: 299–305.

⁶⁴ See Morgan 2003: 75.

⁶⁵ Hardie 1994: 199. Further on Telemachus as a model for Ascanius, see Maurach 1968.

proves that no one can match the epic's true hero.⁶⁶ There are hints, however, of other reasons motivating the denial of full heroic action to Ascanius. One is his disturbing desire to continue fighting. After Apollo departs, Ascanius is still eager to enter the fray (*avidum pugnae* ... / *Ascanium*, 661–2), and has to be restrained by the older Trojans. His eagerness for the fight reflects not only his father, desperate to return to battle after being wounded in Book Twelve (*avidus pugnae*, 430), but also young warriors like Nisus and Euryalus, whose desire for glory and slaughter leads to their deaths.⁶⁷ When Apollo tells him that he has done enough (*sit satis*, 653), in an echo both of Nisus' unsuccessful attempt to check Euryalus (*absistamus* ... / *poenarum exhaustum satis est*, 355–6) and of Apollo's injunction to withdraw to Patroclus in the *Iliad* shortly before his death (16.707–9), there is a clear suggestion that if he is not restrained his life will be in grave danger.⁶⁸ Indeed, Apollo has already intimated as much, when he remarked on how Ascanius had encountered Numanus unscathed (*impune Numanum* / *oppetiisse*, 653–4) suggesting not only that Ascanius might not have escaped unharmed but also, by use of the verb *oppetere*, that the encounter might have been one with death.⁶⁹ Moreover, the suggestion of danger is underscored by the description of Ascanius as *ardentem* (652) just before Apollo's message of restraint.⁷⁰ The other heroes who burn like this in Book Nine either die,⁷¹ or – in the case of Turnus – make disastrous decisions that ruin a real chance of winning the war.⁷²

The presence of multiple mentors trying to restrain Ascanius emphasises the message that further engagement in the war could be disastrous, both for the young prince and for the Trojan cause. Not only does Apollo hold Ascanius back,⁷³ but so do the Trojan chieftains, who recognise the god despite his disguise, though

⁶⁶ Wiltshire 1999.

⁶⁷ *Aen.* 9.185, 354.

⁶⁸ For Apollo's clear-sighted understanding of the *Aeneid* and its events, see Köves-Zulauf 1997.

⁶⁹ For the common meaning 'to die' for *oppetere*, see OLD *oppeto* b.

⁷⁰ For Apollo as a figure of restraint in the *Aeneid* generally, see J. F. Miller 1994.

⁷¹ Nisus (198) and Bitias (703).

⁷² *Aen.* 9.760–1. The mad lust to kill (*caedisque insana cupido*, 760) which drives Turnus here can also be compared to Ascanius' eagerness for battle at 661.

⁷³ Dumézil 1968: 416.

Ascanius seems not to do so (another sign of unreadiness to act as a leader for his people), and thus fulfil the task of guiding the young that Aeneas had imposed on Mnestheus and Serestus. As we have already seen, there is some doubt as to whether Ascanius does refrain from further engagement in the battle, since he appears on the walls of the camp in Book Ten, and this may be further fostered by recollection of how Ascanius' minders were unable to hold him back in Book Five.⁷⁴ There is, moreover, a further danger hinted at in his engagement with Numanus Remulus, which threatens not only his life but also the Roman future he represents.

When Ascanius kills Numanus with an arrow shot from the walls of the Trojan camp, he resembles no one so much as the Trojan prince Paris, the *Iliad*'s most famous archer. This resemblance has led some scholars to criticise Ascanius for cowardice,⁷⁵ and the choice of weapon certainly helps to emphasise that Ascanius is not yet a fully fledged warrior able to engage in hand-to-hand fighting.⁷⁶ On the other hand, as Apollo points out, the arrow is the god's weapon too (*paribus ... armis*, 655), and the position on the battlements was a dangerous one (662–3), so accusations of cowardice are somewhat out of place.⁷⁷ In the light of Numanus' emphatic declaration of the differences between the Trojans and the Italians, however, the apparent Trojanness of Ascanius' first act in battle is worth consideration. Numanus had forcefully placed Trojan and Italian stereotypes in stark opposition to each other, implying that no Roman union was possible.⁷⁸ While Virgil suggests that not all of Numanus' speech should be taken seriously (*digna atque indigna relatu*, 595),⁷⁹ he also hints

⁷⁴ *nec exanimis possunt retinere magistri* (669).

⁷⁵ Lyne 1987, esp. 202–5. On the negative connotations of bows and arrows in the ancient world, see Ebbott 2003: 47–9; and on fighting from a position of siege, see Numanus Remulus (*Aen.* 9.598–9). Another model of Trojan archery is Pandarus, who treacherously shoots Menelaus from the walls of Troy (*Iliad* 4.85–140) and breaks the truce.

⁷⁶ Bows and arrows were the typical weapons of young men before they had gone through their rites of passage: Vidal-Naquet 1986a: 106–28.

⁷⁷ Hardie 1994: 199. Note too that Servius, *ad Aen.* 9.590, is reminded of a number of Romans who won glory in war when very young.

⁷⁸ On the stereotypes in Numanus' speech, see Dickie 1985; Horsfall 1971; Quint 1993: 24–6; Thomas 1982: 93–107; Winnington-Ingram 1971–2.

⁷⁹ Hardie 1994, *ad Aen.* 9.595, also notes that similarities between what Numanus says and what Rumour has said earlier about the Trojans, which further stresses the unreliability of his statements.

that some of it is worthy of consideration, and his main message of the incompatibility of the Trojans and Latins is one that the *Aeneid* presents as a genuine issue.⁸⁰ Ascanius, as we have seen, symbolises the movement from Troy towards Rome but also represents the ongoing presence of Trojan blood and Trojan customs in the Rome of Virgil's own day. This is potentially problematic not only because of the effeminacy and excess that Numanus imputes to the Trojans, an unmanliness that Roman moralists saw in their own culture once empire had been won, but also because of his suggestion that Trojans and Italians could not live peacefully together: if the Romans retain elements of both Italian and Trojan natures, then internecine strife appears inevitable. The war between the Trojans and Italians in the second half of the *Aeneid* is a clear precursor to the civil wars of the first century BCE, and the death at the hands of the Trojan Ascanius of the Italian Numanus Remulus is a microcosm of such civil strife, particularly since Numanus' very names proclaim his Romanness, recalling both Remus and Numa, slaughtered brother of and successor to Rome's founder and first king, Romulus, respectively. A further reason, then, why it is essential to stop the Trojan Ascanius killing more Italians is that his act hints too closely at future conflicts that threatened to destroy Rome from within. This suggestion is underlined by the way in which Apollo's injunction to the boy to refrain from war (*cetera parce, puer, bello*, 656) echoes an earlier paternal call for two children to refrain from civil strife, Anchises' address to the shades of Caesar and Pompey, also addressed as *pueri*, in the underworld:⁸¹

'ne, pueri, ne tanta animis adsuescite bella
 neu patriae validas in viscera vertite vires;
 tuque prior, tu parce, genus qui ducis Olympo,
 proice tela manu, sanguis meus!' (*Aeneid* 6.832–5)

'Boys, do not allow your spirits to become accustomed to such terrible wars, don't direct your manly strength in an attack on your country's vital organs; and you, my descendant, you who lead our family to the heavens, you be the first to refrain from hurling a weapon with your hand!'

⁸⁰ On how the *Aeneid* uses stereotypes to create an idea of Romanness, see Toll 1997.

⁸¹ On Troy and civil war in the *Aeneid*, see further Skinner 2013.

The echoes of Anchises' admonition in Apollo's address to Ascanius hint that not only personal danger but also potential danger to the future Roman state might be involved if the young Trojan is allowed to continue his path to manhood.⁸² There are good reasons, then, to hold Ascanius back from adulthood, and he remains a boy until the end of the epic, scathingly referred to as *puer* by Juno in Book Ten (70) and, as the [next chapter](#) explores in greater detail, still playing the part of a child up to his final appearance in Book Twelve. The continual offers of initiation followed by denial of adulthood, however, not only underscore Ascanius' vulnerability and his dangerous potential but also make him a model *in parvo* of the epic plot which notoriously promises ends that it never delivers.

⁸² Stories of civil strife between Ascanius and supporters of Lavinia, discussed above, pp. 19–21, lend further weight to such concerns. There may also be a hint in Apollo's *parce ... bello* (656) of Anchises' *parcere subiectis* (*Aen.* 6.853), also underlining Ascanius' destructive and unRoman impulses: the command directs Ascanius to refrain from war, but could also be read as directing him to be sparing in war. On the dangers of Ascanius' Trojanness for Augustan Rome, see Casali 2009: 312–25.

CHAPTER 9

RELEGATING ASCANIUS

At the same time that the second half of the *Aeneid* traces the frustrations of Ascanius' attempts to attain adulthood, it also reasserts his role as his father's successor. It does this, perhaps surprisingly, despite the introduction of Lavinia and the possibility of a new lineage through the merger of Trojan and Latin peoples in a Roman future. However, though remaining relatively prominent in the narrative, Ascanius is placed firmly in a subsidiary role. Even ignoring the issues over the succession and the introduction of his potential rival, Silvius, in Book Six, it is made very clear that, although his father's first-born son and his heir, Ascanius is regarded as a secondary figure. His role as a child is foregrounded once more, and to the end of the *Aeneid* he is depicted as immature, playful and in need of education. As much as the interventions of Apollo, who holds him back from full engagement in the battles in Italy, and Venus, who suggests removing him from the narrative altogether, it is this depiction, emphasised by the ways in which Aeneas speaks to and about his son, which denies Ascanius full participation in his father's epic. The emphasis on childishness also circles back repeatedly to Book Three and the earliest days of the movement away from Troy. Ascanius is thus presented not only as a child, but as a Trojan child, and any sense of growth towards a future – the very future which he represents – is frustrated by the regressive circularity of the text.

Beginning Again

The seventh book of Virgil's *Aeneid* opens with a sense of hopeful peace as the Trojans sail through the night and arrive at dawn at the mouth of the Tiber. Though shadows hint at the troubles to come,¹

¹ Reckford 1961.

Aeneas joyfully directs his men to turn to the promising land that lies before them (35–6). Soon afterwards, Ascanius makes the second of his two speeches in the *Aeneid*, as Aeneas and his chieftains recline on shady grass beside the river eating fresh fruits that are piled high on a base of bread (107–11). After consuming the fruit, their attention turns to the bread beneath it and they devour this too, provoking an apparently joking comment from Ascanius:

consumptis hic forte aliis, ut vertere morsus
exiguam in Cererem penuria adegit edendi,
et violare manu malisque audacibus orbem
fatalis crusti patulis nec parcere quadris:
‘heus, etiam mensas consumimus?’ inquit Iulus,
nec plura, adludens. (*Aeneid* 7.112–17)

At this moment it came about that everything else had been devoured, when want of things to eat drove them to turn their gnawing against the meagre bread, and to rend with hand and daring jaws the round of the fateful crust and show no mercy to the pieces laid out on the ground: ‘Hey, are we eating our tables too?’ said Ascanius, nothing more, he was playing around.

Ascanius’ words act as an electrifying cue for his father who seizes upon them as revelation of a long-promised omen and the fulfilment of a final condition placed on the Trojans’ settlement in Italy:²

ea vox audita laborum
prima tulit finem, primamque loquentis ab ore
eripuit pater ac stupefactus numine pressit.
continuo ‘salve fatis mihi debita tellus
vosque’ ait ‘o fidi Troiae salvete penates:
hic domus, haec patria est. genitor mihi talia namque
(nunc repeto) Anchises fatorum arcana reliquit:
“cum te, nate, fames ignota ad litora vectum
accisis coget dapibus consumere mensas,
tum sperare domos defessus, ibique memento
prima locare manu molirique aggere tecta.”
haec erat illa fames, haec nos suprema manebat
exitii positura modum.’ (*Aeneid* 7.117–29)

When heard, that utterance was the first thing to bring an end to their toils, and the father snatched the first word from the son’s mouth as he spoke

² For typical features of scenes of prophecy and omen displayed in this passage see O’Hara 1990: 14–15.

and, astonished by divine manifestation, firmly repressed both word and speaker. Immediately he said 'Hail, land owed to me by the fates, and you, hail, o faithful Penates of Troy: this is home, this is the fatherland. For indeed my father Anchises bequeathed just such secrets of the fates to me (and now I repeat them): "When, son, you have been carried to unknown shores and hunger compels you to eat up your tables after the feast has been consumed, then you will be bone-weary of hoping for a home, and there you must remember to lay out the first buildings with your own hand and fortify them with a rampart." This was that hunger, and this final step was all that remained to put a period to our destruction.'

Multiple echoes of the opening lines of the *Aeneid* cast this episode as marking a new beginning both for the Trojans and for the epic text. Where in Book One, Aeneas was the first to come from the shores of Troy to Italy (*primus ab oris*, 1), here in Book Seven the first remark is snatched from its littoral-sounding origin in Ascanius' mouth (*primamque ... ab ore*, 118). Primacy is stressed again in the claim that the hearing of Ascanius' words was the first thing to bring an end to the Trojans' troubles (*laborum / prima tulit finem*, 117–18) and in Anchises' reported instruction to build the first houses (*prima ... tecta*, 127) at that desperate moment when the Trojans had been driven by hunger to eat their tables. Ends, too, are strongly emphasised, again in language that looks back to the poem's opening lines. The conclusion that is brought about for the Trojans is specifically an end of toils (*laborum / ... finem*, 117–18), evoking the many labours anticipated for Aeneas in Book One (*tot ... labores*, 10). Similarly, Anchises' prediction that Aeneas will be completely exhausted (*defessus*, 126) when the end finally appears possible recalls moments of utter extremity at the beginning of the Trojans' journey, during the fall of Troy and after the storms that brought them to the Carthaginian coast.³ Aeneas strongly underlines the fact that the end is nigh, claiming that the picnic and Ascanius' words are the final moment (*suprema manebat*, 128) before a beginning, marked with the

³ Post-storm exhaustion (*Aen.* 1.157); exhaustion after the long siege of Troy (*Aen.* 2.285); exhaustion leading to despairing suicide during Troy's last hours (*Aen.* 2.565). A similar sense of despair is implicit in *sperare domos defessus* (126), where the infinitive can be taken as the object of the participle as well as (as most frequently seen in translations) the first of several infinitives with the imperative *memento* at the end of the line: *TLL defetiscor* 1c.

future participle *positura* (129), of the imposition of a boundary and thus an end (*modum*, 129) for the terminal fates (*exitii*, 129) visited upon the long-suffering Trojans. The anticipated placing of such limits clearly gestures towards the end which the *Aeneid* frequently promises and often delays;⁴ at the same time it suggests that the Trojans will not suffer a repetition of their previous losses on Italian soil.⁵

A similar stress on new beginnings is also apparent in Ascanius' second appearance in Book Seven, when he wounds Silvia's stag,⁶ described as the first cause of the war in Italy, and of new toils (*quae prima laborum / causa fuit belloque animos accendit agrestis*, 481–2). Here too we see primacy stressed, as well as the sufferings and war that had been announced as the *Aeneid*'s subject in the proem (*multa quoque et bello passus*, *Aen.* 1.5), while the idea that Ascanius' action is the cause of the war echoes the prologue's invocation to the Muse to relate the causes of Aeneas' sufferings to the poet (*Musa, mihi causas memora*, *Aen.* 1.8). Thus at the opening of the *Aeneid*'s second half, Ascanius is closely connected with the idea that something new is starting for the Trojans, and with the implication that this new beginning marks an end to their suffering. At the same time, however, the new beginning looks very like a restart of the old Trojan story, and toils begin anew on Italian soil (*prima laborum / causa*, *Aen.* 7.481–2) soon after their end has been triumphantly proclaimed (*laborum / prima tulit finem*, *Aen.* 7.117–18). Regressive circularity thus remains a real possibility for Virgil's Trojans, and Ascanius is as deeply implicated in the repetitions of the past that fill the second half of the *Aeneid* as he is involved in the new start and happy conclusion

⁴ Mitchell-Boyask 1996.

⁵ Quint 1989a, 1989b. The strong term *exitium* and its cognate adjective *exitialis* are used elsewhere in the *Aeneid* only of death, destruction and the objects that cause them. In the first half of the *Aeneid*, the deaths are predominantly Trojan; after Book Seven, the tide turns: 2.31 (*donum exitiale*: Trojan horse), 131 (*exitium*: Sinon's putative death), 190 (*magnum exitium*: doom in store for Troy); 5.625 (*exitio*: doom in store for the Trojan women); 6.511 (*scelus exitiale*: Helen's deadly betrayal of Deiphobus); 9.316 (*exitio*: deaths of the Italians at the hands of Nisus and Euryalus); 10.13 (*exitium magnum*: Hannibal), 850 (*exitium infelix*: Lausus' death a fate worse than death for Mezentius); 12.761 (*exitium*: Aeneas threatens death, chasing Turnus), 924 (*exitium dirum*: Aeneas' spear brings death for Turnus).

⁶ Discussed above, pp. 147–54.

that his father predicts during the Trojans' first meal on Italian soil. The twin openings to the narrative that starts in Book Seven suggest that while Ascanius still symbolizes his people's future, and indeed is instrumental in setting that future in motion, it might turn out to be a future that replays the past rather than putting the past to rest and ensuring the end to toils that Aeneas and the *Aeneid* both desire.

Table-Eating

The past to which the table-eating episode returns our attention is a horrifying moment in the 'history of false starts' recounted in Book Three,⁷ when the Trojans were set upon by Harpies on the islands of the Strophades. During the fight that started after the Trojans began feasting on the Harpies' apparently unguarded herds of cattle and goats, their leader Celaeno uttered a prophecy that seemed to condemn the Trojans' hope of ever finding a home:

'bellum etiam pro caede boum stratisque iuvenis,
Laomedontiadae, bellumne inferre paratis
et patrio Harpyias insontis pellere regno?
accipite ergo animis atque haec mea figite dicta,
quae Phoebus pater omnipotens, mihi Phoebus Apollo
praedixit, vobis Furiarum ego maxima pando.
Italiam cursu petitis ventisque vocatis:
ibitis Italiam portusque intrare licebit.
sed non ante datam cingetis moenibus urbem
quam vos dira fames nostraeque iniuria caedis
ambesas subigat malis absumere mensas.' (*Aeneid* 3.247–57)

'Sons of Laomedon, are you prepared to make war again, war even for the sake of slaughtered cattle and the bullocks you have heroically laid low? Are you ready to drive the innocent Harpies from their father's kingdom? Receive then these words of mine, and fix them in your minds: the all-powerful father told them in prophecy to Apollo, and Phoebus Apollo to me, and now I, the greatest of the Furies, reveal them to you. You seek Italy in your journeying and by the summoning of the winds: you will go

⁷ Hexter 1999: 66. See also Horsfall 1989: 11, n. 24. On the connections between the references to table-eating in Books Three and Seven, see Mackail 1914; Primmer 1994–5.

to Italy and will be allowed to enter Italian harbours. But a city for you to circle round with walls won't be granted before terrible hunger and the wrongs you have done us by this slaughter compel you to gnaw at your tables with your jaws and devour them.'

The alleged authority of Apollo and Jupiter lends weight to Celaeno's threat,⁸ which terrifies Aeneas' companions (259–62). The Harpy's close connection to the prophecy is stressed when Aeneas describes it as an uncanny portent, abominable to relate (*novum dictuque nefas Harpyia Celaeno / prodigium canit*, 365–6), which motivates his troubled enquiry to the seer Helenus about the future in Italy:⁹

'quae prima pericula vito?
quidve sequens tantos possim superare labores?' (*Aeneid* 3.367–8)

'What are the first dangers I should avoid? Following what course might I be able to overcome such great toils?'

The emphasis here on primacy (*prima*, 367) and on toils (*labores*, 368) is, as we have seen, later picked up in the table-eating scene in Book Seven: one of several reasons to think of the Harpies and Celaeno's curse as we see the fulfilment of her prediction when the Trojans arrive in Italy.

Indeed, Celaeno remains a prominent figure to the end of Book Three, where the troubles she and Helenus predicted are said to pale into insignificance when compared to the last and most horrifying of all the disasters that had beset Aeneas during his journey through the Mediterranean, the death of his father Anchises:

'amitto Anchisen. hic me, pater optime, fessum
deseris, heu, tantis nequiquam erepte periclis!
nec vates Helenus, cum multa horrenda moneret,
hos mihi praedixit luctus, non dira Celaeno.' (*Aeneid* 3.710–13)

'I am bereft of Anchises. Here, best of fathers, you abandon me in a state of exhaustion – alas – you were snatched from the great dangers of Troy to no avail! The prophet Helenus did not foreshadow this grief when he warned me of many terrible things to come, nor did dread Celaeno.'

⁸ On the nightmarish in Book Three see Bettini 1997.

⁹ Aeneas' concern is acknowledged by Helenus' reply: 'don't shudder at the thought of the gnashings at your tables that lie ahead of you' (*nec tu mensarum morsus horresce futuros*, *Aen.* 3.394).

It is with relieved surprise, therefore, that we realise Celaeno's prophecy has been fulfilled harmlessly on the very day of the Trojans' arrival in Latium. Even more surprising is the fact that Aeneas does not mention Celaeno (or Helenus) in Book Seven, instead referring to Anchises as his authority for the 'solution' to Ascanius' joke about table-eating. The episode has been seen as an indication of the unfinished state of Virgil's epic, 'the closest Virgil comes to disaster',¹⁰ and more recently as one of several characteristic inconsistencies in Virgil's epic text.¹¹ There appears, however, to be a political point to this inconsistency, which puts Aeneas' family at the very centre of a crucial moment in the plot as outlined by Jupiter in Book One, when the Trojans realise that they have at last arrived at their destination. Innovations both by Virgil and by Aeneas ensure the prominence of Aeneas' family: Aeneas replaces Celaeno with his father Anchises as the source of the prophecy, while Virgil puts the words which reveal its fulfilment into the mouth of Ascanius, where other versions of the story attribute the table-eating comment to an unnamed companion or one of Aeneas' several sons, or leave out reference to a second party altogether.¹² Thus the three generations of Aeneas' family unite once more, here symbolising not the flight from Troy but the arrival in Italy, and Aeneas again is at the centre of the group, holding the pieces together and ensuring here not simply the survival but the coming ascendancy of his family in a new land.

It seems likely, in other words, that Aeneas has deliberately chosen to attribute the table-eating prophecy to his father rather

¹⁰ Lee 1979: 184, n. 24. The replacement of Celaeno by Anchises has also been explained as: (i) forgetfulness on Aeneas' part: Mack 1999: 141; (ii) a reference to some unreported aspect of Aeneas' meeting with his father in Book Six: Kinsey 1987; Horsfall 2000: 112–13. Aeneas' claim in Book Seven that he is repeating (*nunc repeto*, 123) his father's admonition, and the order that Anchises allegedly gave him to remember (*memento*, 126), which echoes a similar exhortation in Book Six to remember (*memento*, 851), may encourage such reasoning. On dealing with inconsistencies in Latin epic, see Martindale 1993; O'Hara 2005. Nicholas Horsfall, in particular, has paid attention to Virgil's inconsistencies: see, for example, Horsfall 1979, 1981, 1991 and 2000: 110–13, 118–19 on this episode in particular. Further on the table-eating prophecy, see Grassmann-Fischer 1966: 39–53; O'Hara 1996: 188.

¹¹ O'Hara 2007: 82.

¹² Unnamed companion or son of Aeneas: Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.55.3. Anchises realises fulfilment of prophecy by himself: *Origo Gentis Romanae* 10.5–11.1. Aeneas does: Conon, *FGrH* 46.5; Lycophron, *Alexandra* 1250–2; Strabo, *Geography* 13.1.53.

than the dread Harpy, spinning the moment of revelation in a way that occludes horrors and accentuates the positive as well as his own family. Such suspicions are strengthened by Aeneas' adoption of the role of a good leader, in the guise both of a Roman general and of a Greek colonist throughout the *Aeneid*,¹³ and the ways in which the table-eating episode in Book Seven evokes both those roles. There are significant similarities here, firstly, with other narratives of colonisation.¹⁴ Typically, in these stories, would-be founders of cities see signs of divine approval in quotidian events, accidents or chance remarks. They seize upon them to solve riddling oracles imposed on their search for new homelands by Apollo,¹⁵ and thus justify the establishment of cities and prove their right to rule them, while simultaneously adding lustre to their own names and the reputations of their descendants.¹⁶ Secondly, when Aeneas seizes upon his son's joke to solve the table-eating prophecy, he acts not simply as a legendary founder of a colony, alert to any chance that might favour the undertaking in which he and his people were engaged, but also in the manner of many real-life leaders of the ancient world, always on the lookout for ominous moments that could be turned to political ends.¹⁷ Again, accidents and chance remarks often provided the basis for the revelation of divine support: the sign of a good leader was his ability to identify and point out the meaning hidden even in apparently mundane events, and thus make them meaningful.¹⁸ Such strategies for the manipulation of public opinion also included the affectation of blindness to unfavourable omens,¹⁹ and the representation

¹³ Roman general: Nisbet 1978; Greek colonist: Horsfall 1989.

¹⁴ Carcopino 1968: 590–1. Further on colonisation oracles see Dougherty 1992; Parke and Wormell 1956; Pease 1917. For the *Aeneid*'s insistent presentation of itself as a foundation story, see Miles 1999.

¹⁵ On Apollo's close connection with colonisation oracles see Parke and Wormell 1956: 49–50, 79, n. 4; Cairns 1979: 70–1.

¹⁶ E.g. Plutarch, *Moralia* 294c; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 19.1.2–3.2.

¹⁷ For the political manipulation of religion in Rome see Taylor 1949: 87–97; MacBain 1982.

¹⁸ On the importance of acknowledging omens, see Cicero, *de Divinatione* 1.103 and Pease 1963, *ad loc.* For the practice, see Halliday 1913: 46–53; Liebeschuetz 1979: 24–6.

¹⁹ E.g. Livy 10.40.

of adverse events as signs of divine approval and future success.²⁰ When Aeneas seizes upon Ascanius' apparently joking remark as a sign that the gods favour the Trojan settlement in Italy and at the same time suppresses mention of the uncanny, ominous Celaeno, he acts like just such a leader. We can compare Alexander the Great, for example, who arrived at Delphi on an inauspicious day when the priestess was not giving oracles but nonetheless summoned her and, when she refused to appear, attempted to drag her to the temple. She exclaimed protestingly that he was invincible in his determination. Nothing more was needed: Alexander claimed these violently elicited words as his omen and departed.²¹ Kledonomanancy of this kind, finding ominous import in chance remarks, was, moreover, not only the prerogative of towering figures like Alexander but a legitimate Roman method of divination,²² and – since the person who uttered the remark taken as an omen was generally unwitting, and often a child – a particularly appropriate form of divination to appear at this point in Virgil's narrative, where the child Ascanius again makes a prominent appearance at a fateful moment.²³ In Book Seven Aeneas asserts not only his people's right to settle in Italy, and his fitness to rule them, but also his connections to the Roman world he is to help found. Virgil could be said to collaborate with the process, naming Jupiter as the inspiration behind the use of bread bases as 'tables' on which to lay out the feast,²⁴ and putting Ascanius in place to aid

²⁰ E.g. Frontinus, *Strategemata: de dissolvendo metu, quem milites ex adversis conceperint ominibus*. See also Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 19.5.1–4; Ammianus Marcellinus 21.2.1–2; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 45.2.5–6.

²¹ Plutarch, *Alexander* 14.6–7. For other examples of such opportunistic behaviour see Herodotus 8.137; Tacitus, *Annals* 2.13; Livy 9.14.7–8. Verbal sleight of hand by founders of colonies is exemplified in Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 19.3.1–2, Plutarch, *Moralia* 293f–294c, 296d–e, and in Dido's interpretation of King Iarbas' offer of land when founding Carthage (*Aen.* 1.367–68).

²² On kledonomanancy see further Bouché-Leclercq 1879: 154–60; Halliday 1913: 229–34; Peradotto 1969. Examples can be seen at Livy 5.55.1–2, Cicero, *de Divinatione* 1.103–4; Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 10; Valerius Maximus 1.5.3; Herodotus 5.51; Augustine, *Confessions* 8.12.29.

²³ For children and kledonomanancy, see Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 69 and White 1975, *ad loc.* On the association of children with supernatural phenomena, see Golden 1990: 10. On foundation prophecies in the *Aeneid*, see E. L. Harrison 1985.

²⁴ 'as the god Jupiter was the one to suggest' (*sic Iuppiter ipse monebat, Aen.* 7.110).

in Aeneas' revelation, naming him 'Iulus' twice as he does so to underline both the Roman flavour of the scene and its political importance.²⁵

At the same time, however, Virgil highlights the political manipulation apparent in the episode and points in particular to its consequences for Ascanius, whose status as an unwitting child is insisted upon by his father's appropriation of his comment as the revelation of an omen no one else had recognised. The scene is complex, and some harsh realities lie beneath the apparent tranquillity of what might be described as 'just another picnic'.²⁶ The episode resembles a pastoral idyll, set in a *locus amoenus*, with grassy shade, a river nearby, birdsong, rustic fruits to eat and a handsome young man to complete the picture.²⁷ Aeneas and his Trojans are reminiscent of Lucretian philosophers, untroubled by cares of state or business, who take their ease 'beneath the branches of a tall tree' (*sub ramis arboris altae*),²⁸ a phrase repeated at *Aeneid* 7.108, and again later in the *de Rerum Natura*,²⁹ describing the jovial ease of early man, in a similar pastoral setting.³⁰ Carefree simplicity, *otium*, hints at Golden Age vegetarianism,³¹ and the piety implicit in the ritual language used to describe the bread as 'spelt wafers' (*adorea liba*, 109)³² all combine to create a nostalgic sense of old-fashioned morality and underline an impression of peace.³³ Such peace is what Aeneas hopes for, and what we might expect in Latinus' Latium, where the royal family traced its descent from Saturn, the god of the Golden Age,³⁴ but it is not what the immediate future holds, either for Aeneas or for

²⁵ *Aen.* 7.107; 116.

²⁶ Lindsay 1967: 36.

²⁷ These features are all present in the famous examples of the *locus amoenus* theme at *Odyssey* 5.55–73, 7.112–31; Theocritus, *Idylls* 7.135–46. For similar scenes of rustic simplicity, see Tibullus 2.5.95–100; Ovid, *Fasti* 1.395–404, 3.523–6.

²⁸ *de Rerum Natura* 2.30.

²⁹ *de Rerum Natura* 5.1393.

³⁰ The Lucretian tone is further enhanced by the echo in Aeneas and his companions 'laying their bodies down' (*corpora ... deponunt*, *Aen.* 7.108) of *de Rerum Natura* 1.258.

³¹ No meat was eaten in the peace-filled Golden Age: Virgil, *Georgics* 2.536–8; Gleason 1991: 313.

³² The sacral connotations of *liba* are discussed by Boas 1938: 241–2.

³³ For the nostalgia of Roman picnics see Gowers 1993: 18.

³⁴ *Aen.* 7.45–9, 202–4; Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.157–60. On the innocence of Italy in the *Aeneid*, see Moorton 1989.

Italy, as the programmatic invocation to Erato at the beginning of Book Seven has recently reminded us (37–45). Moreover, there are signs of the ‘terrible wars’ (*horrida bella*, *Aen.* 6.86) to come even in what looks like an idyllically peaceful picnic scene.

For all its apparent peace, the shady Italian landscape faintly recalls the Trojans’ earlier forbidding anchorage at Carthage (*Aeneid* 1.159–65),³⁵ while the vegetarian meal in Book Seven looks back to an earlier, more disappointingly meagre meal of grain in Book One (174–9).³⁶ Even more striking is the violence of the Trojans’ consumption of the picnic in Book Seven. The Trojans tear into their meal: they ‘turn their gnawing’ (*vertere morsus*, 112) against the scanty bread, impiously ‘violating’ the crust (*violare*, 114) with their hands and their ‘boldly daring jaws’ (*malisque audacibus*, 114), ‘showing no mercy’ (*nec parcere*, 115) to the fragments.³⁷ Even the first, seemingly innocent meal thus holds clues of the destruction to come as the Trojans press on with their colonisation of Italy.³⁸ And these clues are highlighted by the description of the Trojans at the beginning of the table-eating episode as the ‘sons of Laomedon’ (*Laomedontia pubes*, 105), an echo of Celaeno’s negative characterisation of the Trojan invaders of her land in Book Three as *Laomedontiadae* (248).³⁹ The Trojans’ behaviour on the

³⁵ Reckford 1961, sees ‘latent symbolism of war in his [Aeneas’] entering the dark womb of the river’ (255), and Putnam 1970: 416–17 also finds the description of the shaded, swirling river in Book Seven disturbing. See Jenkyns 1998: 59–72 for discussion of the impact of the Libyan landscape in Book One.

³⁶ In particular, the *Cereale solum* (‘wheaten base’, 111) and *exiguam ... Cererem* (‘scanty grain’, 113) in Book Seven echo the *Cererem corruptam undis Cerealiaque arma* (‘grain damaged by the waves and implements for cooking wheat’, 177) of Book One.

³⁷ The importance of being sparing is stressed by Anchises (*Aen.* 6.853). Aeneas notoriously shows no mercy to Turnus at the end of the epic, a conclusion perhaps also faintly forecast here in Book Seven before the war has started.

³⁸ Such forebodings are strengthened if there is, as Alessandro Barchiesi suggested in his 2001 Gray lecture at the Faculty of Classics, Cambridge, a hint of the *orbis terrarum* in the round bread torn apart by the picnicking/colonising Trojans, and an echo of the earth’s *crusta* in the *crustum* they destroy. This negative interpretation of the Trojan colonisation of Italy is expressed explicitly by Juno in Book Ten, in reference to Ascanius’ shooting of Silvia’s stag among other crimes: ‘they [the Trojans] are subjugating other people’s fields beneath their yoke and carrying off booty’ (*arva aliena iugo premere atque avertere praedas*, 78). Highet 1972: 71 notes that in one version of the myth the Trojans did actually seize land from aborigines and drive off livestock, which occasioned the war. Cf. Livy 1.1.5; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.57.

³⁹ Compare also Dido, who speaks of the perjuries of the race of Laomedon in Book Four (542). For the criticism implicit in describing the Trojans as descendants of the

Strophades was strongly reminiscent of the infamous slaughter of the cattle of the Sun in *Odyssey* 12, and the subsequent engagement with the Harpies casts some doubt over the propriety of the Trojans' colonising project.⁴⁰ Celaeno speaks of the wrongs done to the Harpies by the Trojan slaughter (*nostraeque iniuria caedis*, *Aen.* 3.256), apparently referring both to the unsanctioned slaughter of the Harpies' flocks and to the attempted slaughter of the Harpies themselves, while the Trojans' actions as they engage with this new foe betray the harsh reality of the second half of the *Aeneid* that colonisation and bloodshed are closely entwined, with suffering for the existing inhabitants of the land inevitable. On the Strophades an earlier apparently peaceful meal in a pastoral setting was interrupted by a violent onslaught, and an onslaught, moreover, begun by rightful inhabitants fighting back against unlawful aggression. And rather than piling the grass (*per herbam*, *Aen.* 7.109) with bread and fruit as in Latium, the Trojan aggressors hide weapons there, carrying a promise of further bloodshed:

haud secus ac iussi faciunt tectosque per herbam
disponunt enses et scuta latentia condunt. (*Aeneid* 3.236–7)

Just so and as ordered they act: they lay down their swords hidden in the grass and bury in it their lurking shields.

The weaponry lurking in a sinister fashion in the grass on the Harpies' island creates some unease, intensified later when we see the grass of Italy similarly polluted.⁴¹ Moreover, the sense that something is amiss in Book Three is amplified by the use of the verb *condere*, which echoes the final act of Virgil's epic, where Aeneas buries his sword in Turnus' chest, evoking the disturbing ambiguities that permeate the Trojans' foundation of Rome.⁴² This earlier scene, which Aeneas suppresses but which

notoriously treacherous Laomedon, see also *Georgics* 1.502: *Laomedontee Troiae*; Moskalew 1982: 173, n. 81.

⁴⁰ As Glei 1997 notes, the attack on the Harpies 'was no just war' ('also kein *bellum iustum* war', 146–7). Similar views are expressed by Vance 1981. Further on negative views on slaughter and sacrifice of animals in the *Aeneid*, see Dyson 1995–6, 2001.

⁴¹ In Book Nine the grass is strewn with drunken bodies (164) and then with corpses (316), as Nisus and Euryalus' night-time raid makes real the threat of violence in the Trojans' first days in Italy.

⁴² James 1995.

readers of Book Seven can hardly avoid remembering, thus suggests that we should be alive to the implications of the violence in the table-eating episode, incongruous as it may seem at a picnic turned good omen.⁴³

There is violence, too, in the interaction between Aeneas and Ascanius in Book Seven as the hero asserts the true meaning of the episode. As Aeneas snatches Ascanius' first utterance from his mouth (*eripuit*, 119), he does something considerably more assertive than other interpreters of omens in the Roman world, who are generally said to accept (*accepi*) a portent rather than wrest it from its context.⁴⁴ One explanation for the violence of Aeneas' interpretative act is his imposition of serious meaning on non-serious comment in a non-serious context. Ascanius' exclamatory *heus*, a common feature of comedy and popular speech,⁴⁵ casts his words as a joke, an impression strengthened by Virgil's description of his short speech as 'playing around' (*adludens*, 117), and to some extent by the violent language that describes the Trojans eating the bread which can also be seen as comic.⁴⁶ So when Aeneas speaks up to turn the episode into something very serious, we see signs of the force required to impose political meaning on the apparently trivial. This stresses Aeneas' adult dominance over his childish son, and suggests too that Aeneas is right to assert that dominance, because Ascanius does not understand what he is saying, as the young speakers of kledonomantic words frequently failed to do. There is, however, another way of viewing the interaction between father and son, which suggests that Ascanius might understand what he is saying, and gives us a more troubling picture of what it means to be the son of an epic hero.

The compound verb *adludere* denotes a joke with a target: those who jest in this way have something particular in mind. Sometimes

⁴³ *pace* Horsfall 2000, *ad loc.*, who argues that the violent language of the table-eating episode is part of the deliberate exaggeration of a humble meal, a Virgilian joke. Horsfall compares the pseudo-Virgilian *Moretum*, discounting the hovering presence of the Harpies in Book Seven.

⁴⁴ E.g. Cicero, *de Divinatione* 1.103, with Pease 1963, *ad loc.*

⁴⁵ The popular nature of the exclamation is also shown by its appearance when informal direct speech appears in other genres, as in Horace's *Satires* (1.3.21), Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (e.g. 1.15, 2.23), and Cicero's letters (*ad Atticum* 13.42.2). Mensching 1970 notes its incongruity in Virgilian epic.

⁴⁶ See above, n. 43.

this is a potentially embarrassing circumstance in the life of the butt of their humour.⁴⁷ At other times, those who make such jokes allude to the character or occupation of the person they are talking to, shaping their words to suit their audience in a way that readers can recognise.⁴⁸ The practice is sometimes intertwined with the provision of analogies and examples that prove the speaker's point, with both the joking and the references directed to the same end.⁴⁹ When it appears in Valerius Maximus' Tiberian collection of memorable deeds and sayings, it refers to the joking quotation of an earlier work of literature, an example of what we today would recognise as literary allusion, flagged as such both by the speaker in the text and by its author. Asked how he has managed to paint a representation of Jupiter so perfect it seemed to have been taken from life, Phidias 'replies that he used some lines of poetry as his teacher' (*illis se versibus quasi magistro usum respondit*, Val. Max. 3.7.ext.4), and then goes on to quote *Iliad* 1.528–30.⁵⁰ Valerius Maximus describes this response approvingly as 'making joking reference to the verses of Homer: an outstanding comment' (*Homeri versibus egregio dicto adlusit*). It seems clear that in the early empire *adludere* could already be used for a reference to a text, even though its cognate *allusio* seems not to have designated a literary allusion until the sixth century CE, while the literary play that modern scholars associate with acts of allusion was not generally signified by *adludere* until the eighth century CE.⁵¹

Thus while Ascanius' joke in Book Seven might simply be directed in a 'fatuous' manner at the consumption of bread 'tables',⁵² there is some justification for reading Virgil's *adludens* as a hint that the young Trojan is referring to something that is more meaningful to his Trojan audience, a jest directed not just at their present experience but also at their past, and in particular

⁴⁷ E.g. Terence, *Eunuchus* 424–5; Phaedrus 3.19.12.

⁴⁸ See Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.11.18 on how the profession of his interlocutor, the lawyer Trebatius, was acknowledged by Cicero's humorous comments during a discussion on terminology (*Trebatio ... adludens*).

⁴⁹ Cicero, *de Oratore* 1.240.

⁵⁰ For the text see Briscoe 1998.

⁵¹ Pucci 1998: 51–2.

⁵² 'fatuous': Horsfall 2000: *ad Aen.* 7.114. Some have also suggested that *mensas* itself contains a pun: see Boas 1938: 228–9; Maltby 1991; O'Hara 1996: 188. Horsfall 2000,

at words they have heard in the past, which, as we have seen, exercised them all greatly. Indeed, the very fact that he is joking sets up an expectation not only that there is a meaning behind his words, but also that there might be meaning that goes deeper than the jest that skims barely below the surface of ‘hey, we are even eating our tables’ (*heus, etiam mensas consumimus?*, 116).⁵³ Ascanius does not have the opportunity to say any more (*nec plura*, 117), because Aeneas interrupts and takes over, but he has already said enough to evoke Celaeno’s prophecy in Book Three that the Trojans will be forced ‘to devour their tables’ (*absumere mensas*, 257). It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that he could have continued speaking, perhaps to refer more specifically to the Harpies and the curse now harmlessly fulfilled. It seems that Virgil intended his readers to note the allusion: we are never told the target of Ascanius’ joking remark,⁵⁴ but the numerous verbal echoes between the scenes in Book Three and Book Seven discussed above strongly encourage the link to be made. It is this allusion that has Aeneas react so violently in his appropriation of the omen, ‘snatching’ (*eripuit*, 119) the ‘first utterance’ (*primam [vocem]*, 118) from his son’s mouth as he spoke, and not only ‘astonished by the divine portent’ (*stupefactus numine*, 119) but also acting oppressively, crushing his son’s briefly heard voice with the overbearing weight of his interpretation (*numine pressit*, 119), silencing the opposing voices of the Harpies to which Ascanius’ joke alluded, and suppressing his son as well.⁵⁵

Ascanius is thus taken out of the limelight, ‘silenced the one time he does speak in the company of his father’,⁵⁶ and in a way which the text marks pointedly. It is important to note, too, how Ascanius

ad loc. dismisses suggestions that *mensas* evokes either the Latin *metior* (portion) or the Umbrian *meffa* (= *liba*, ‘cake’).

⁵³ On hierarchies in the reception of jokes see Cottom 1989: 1–40, esp. 30–1, 39–40.

⁵⁴ Either a dative or *ad* with an accusative would be required to pin down Ascanius’ target: Virgil gives us neither.

⁵⁵ On the dominance of paternal speech in Latin literature, see Fowler 1996. Aeneas’ dominance is accentuated if we hear an echo of stammering baby talk in preponderance of *p* alliteration in the lines immediately following his son’s cut-off remark (*nec plura ... / prima tulit finem, primamque ... / eripuit pater ac stupefactus numine pressit*, 117–19). Compare Horace, *Satires* 1.6.56–7, on which see Gowers 2003: 78, n. 107; 2012, *ad loc.*

⁵⁶ Laird 1999: 195–6. Further on the power of speech in ancient literature, see Montiglio 2000.

is silenced: Aeneas not only snatches up his short jest and speaks over it but also, in using the authority of Anchises to do so, reframes what Ascanius said as a statement that his grandfather had already uttered. Ascanius is made an instrument of destiny, rather than an actor, but is also presented as an integral part of a closely bound family unit, and still intimately tied to the unfolding of fate. At this crucial moment in the Trojans' journey towards Rome, the three figures – grandfather, father and son – who represent the miraculous escape from Troy appear once more. Again, as with that earlier escape, the boy Ascanius represents the past as much as the future.⁵⁷ In Book Seven the voice of Troy speaks through the young prince, harking back even as the moment looks forward. The table-eating episode establishes the Trojans' right to settle in Italy, with Aeneas ruling them, and suggests that the nightmarish past to which the Harpies belonged will be replaced with something more wholesome on Italian soil. It also, however, reminds us of that past, and in doing so reminds us too that Ascanius, who above all other characters in the *Aeneid* represents the future, is also a conduit to the past, an echo, perhaps in jest but one who should be taken seriously all the same, of hellish voices speaking of aggression and calling for further toil.

Aeneas' Farewell

Ascanius' duality, his capacity to direct attention back to an uncomfortable and threatening past as well as forwards towards a desired future, can also be seen in his final appearance in the *Aeneid*. The conclusion to the table-eating episode in Book Seven hinted at the necessity of suppressing Ascanius to allow Jupiter's sanctioned future to unfold and showed us the hero setting his son to one side as he took control of the unfolding epic plot. These tendencies appear again in Book Twelve when a wounded Aeneas chafes to return to the fight, as a great crowd of young men, including the grieving Ascanius, stands by:

⁵⁷ See above, pp. 2–6, on the representation of Aeneas, Anchises and Ascanius in the *forum Augustum*. The attempted burning of the Trojan ships in Book Five during Anchises' funeral games shows us the same family unit: there too the authority of Ascanius' voice was in question and his links to the past as well as the future were clearly visible (see pp. 90–100 above).

stabat acerba fremens ingentem nixus in hastam
Aeneas magno iuvenum et maerentis Iuli
concurso, lacrimis immobilis. (*Aeneid* 12.398–400)

Aeneas was standing there, grumbling loudly and bitterly, leaning on his huge spear, with a great gathering of young men around him, including the grieving Ascanius, unmoved by tears.

There is a stark contrast here between the ‘grieving Ascanius’ (*maerentis Iuli*, 399) and Aeneas, who is ‘unmoved by tears’ (*lacrimis immobilis*, 400) in a manner which evokes his inflexible adherence to Jupiter’s course when preparing to leave the tearful Dido in Book Four.⁵⁸

The suggestion that Aeneas will move on while Ascanius is, for the moment, left behind is further underlined in the short speech the hero makes to his son, the last time Ascanius appears in the *Aeneid*:

ille avidus pugnae suras incluserat auro
hinc atque hinc oditque moras hastamque coruscat.
postquam habilis lateri clipeus loricaque tergo est,
Ascanium fuis circum complectitur armis
summaque per galeam delibans oscula fatur:
‘disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem,
fortunam ex aliis. nunc te mea dextera bello
defensum dabit et magna inter praemia ducet.
tu facito, mox cum matura adoleverit aetas,
sis memor et te animo repetentem exempla tuorum
et pater Aeneas et avunculus excitet Hector.’ (*Aeneid* 12.430–40)

Aeneas, desperate for battle, had encased his shins in gold on this side and on that, and loathes delays and brandishes his spear. After his shield had been fitted to his side and his breastplate to his back he embraces Ascanius, surrounding him with his armoured arms, and taking his last kisses through the helmet says: ‘Boy, learn manliness from me and true toil, good luck from others. Now my right hand will ensure that you are protected in war and will lead you among great rewards. You make sure that, soon when your years grow into maturity, you are mindful and revisit in your thoughts the examples set by your family, and may your father Aeneas and uncle Hector inspire you.’

⁵⁸ Cf. ‘he kept his eyes fixed’ (*immota tenebat / lumina*, *Aen.* 4.331–2); ‘he is moved by no laments’ (*nullis ille movetur / fletibus*, *Aen.* 4.438–9); ‘his resolution remains unmoved’ (*mens immota manet*, *Aen.* 4.449).

Much has been said about how this passage echoes the final parting of Hector and Astyanax in *Iliad* 6.466–81,⁵⁹ and how this reflects on Aeneas and his relationship with his son. Unlike Hector, who removed his helmet to avoid frightening Astyanax, Aeneas closes himself up in his armour (*incluserat*, 430). Unlike Hector's openly affectionate parting, Aeneas' final embrace is ambiguous: the *fusis ... armis* (433) with which he surrounds Ascanius could be either his arms (limbs) or his arms (weapons). Aeneas' farewell has thus been read as "‘impersonal’ yet loving",⁶⁰ 'a stark scene' representative of 'Aeneas' stark life',⁶¹ and an indication that the world in the *Aeneid* is 'unlike Homer's – a world in which authority has the last word, and in which the emotions of subordinate characters are denied expression'.⁶² We should also note, however, a feature of the passage that has not been commented on, perhaps because it is taken for granted: the ways in which it stresses, again, Ascanius' role as the child to his father's adult.

This construction of the childishness of Ascanius can be seen, among other ways, in Aeneas' reworking of the query made by Andromache in Book Three (343) in his final injunction to let 'your father Aeneas and uncle Hector inspire you' (*et pater Aeneas et avunculus excitet Hector*, 440).⁶³ There, as we have already seen, Ascanius' childishness is very much to the fore, both in his passive role as an object of appropriation during Andromache's shaping of an alternative view of the Trojans' future, and in the specifics of how she talks about him as a son, a nephew and a substitute for her own lost child, Astyanax.⁶⁴ Moreover, Astyanax is not the only child hero whose presence echoes in Aeneas' parting instruction to Ascanius. Aeneas' order that Ascanius learn 'good luck from others' (*fortunam ex aliis*, 436) echoes Ajax's parting address to

⁵⁹ The similarities and differences between the two passages are discussed in detail by Feldman 1957–8: 364–5, and Belfiore 1984: 27–30. For the tenderness of the Homeric scene, see Pratt 2007: 26–31.

⁶⁰ Belfiore 1984: 30. Eyben 1991: 136–7 also sees the scene as affectionate.

⁶¹ Lyne 1987: 191.

⁶² Laird 1999: 194.

⁶³ Only the mood of the verb changes: Andromache's interrogative *excitat* becomes Aeneas' authoritative *excitat*.

⁶⁴ See above, pp. 57–70.

the doomed Eurysaces in the *Ajax*, in a scene which also reworks Hector's last words to Astyanax:⁶⁵

ὦ παῖ, γένοιο πατρός εὐτυχέστερος,
τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ὁμοίος· καὶ γένοι' ἂν οὐ κακός. (Sophocles, *Ajax* 550–1)

Child, be luckier than your father, but in other respects just like him: you certainly can't be worse.

Here, then, we see two young models for Ascanius: Astyanax, who dies, and Eurysaces, who lives but whose position as his father's successor is complicated by his status as the son of a concubine. We may wonder which path Ascanius will follow,⁶⁶ but the most important point is that both are very young, much younger than Virgil's Ascanius, who has already killed in battle, emphasising his reversion to childishness here despite his earlier initiation into adulthood.

Ascanius' subordinated childishness is also underlined by the clear marking of Aeneas' allusive interplay, both by his direct reference to Hector when he echoes Andromache's words in Book Three and by the pointed 'be mindful' (*sis memor*, 439).⁶⁷ These not only highlight the allusions but give them a didactic frame that positions Ascanius as a figure in need of heroic instruction. Indeed, the two allusions themselves underline this message: Sophocles famously redefined Homeric heroism,⁶⁸ and the dual presence of Ajax and of Hector, combined with its emphasis on the quintessentially Roman qualities of *virtus*, *labor* and *fortuna*, suggests that Aeneas' last words to Ascanius offer another, Roman definition of heroic identity. This promise is underscored by the strongly educational overtones of the passage.⁶⁹ The imperatives *disce* (435) and *facito* (438), the prophetic *mox cum matura adoleverit aetas*

⁶⁵ For the text see Finglass 2011, with sources *ad loc.* for other classical examples of the theme of inheriting paternal success. Macrobius tells us that Virgil's reworking of Sophocles' *Ajax* is mediated by Accius (*Saturnalia* 6.1.58). On Ajax in the *Aeneid* see Panoussi 1997, 2002; Bleisch 1999. For Ovid's reworking of the scene, see Heil 2012.

⁶⁶ Invocation of Eurysaces may possibly gesture towards the difficulties that Aeneas' son by Lavinia will pose to Ascanius' position as his father's successor, even if (unlike Astyanax) he survives.

⁶⁷ On memory as a marker or allusivity, see Conte 1986: esp. 40–95.

⁶⁸ On how the *Ajax* reflects on Homeric values, see Barker 2004; Mills 1980–1; G. Zanker 1992.

⁶⁹ These overtones are acknowledged by Keith 2000, who uses Aeneas' speech to Ascanius in Book Twelve as an epigraph to her chapter on learning *virtus* from Roman epic, 8–35. Further on Ascanius and other child readers of epic, see Goldschmidt 2013: 149–50.

(438),⁷⁰ the hortatory and historicising *sis memor* (439)⁷¹ and the mention of the *exempla* (439) provided by ancestors all strongly underline the didactic impulse of the speech. Like Anchises' 'Roman, remember' (*Romane memento*, *Aen.* 6.851) in the underworld, this passage rewrites the *Aeneid* as a useful, historical text, one that can offer *exempla* of proper behaviour and thus teach not only Ascanius but also its readers about Roman values.⁷² The message is further enhanced by echoes of exemplary histories such as Livy's, which opens with a similar appeal to memory and similarly represents the deeds of the past as examples for its readers.⁷³

Moreover, close correspondence to the fourth poem of the *Eclogues* underlines the way in which this didactic passage frames the whole epic as a learning experience for the child Ascanius. There, another promising child, also a symbol of a new, idyllic future, reads about the glory of past heroes and the deeds of his ancestors, learning *virtus* and thus ushering in a new, Roman Golden Age:⁷⁴

at simul heroum laudes et facta parentis
iam legere et quae sit poteris cognoscere virtus (*Eclogues* 4.26–7)

But at the same time you will be able to read the praises of heroes and
your father's deeds and come to know what manliness is.

Eclogues Four goes on to associate a repetition of the Homeric past with this learning process: there is a promise that 'your years will become steady and make you a man' (*firmata virum te fecerit aetas*, 37), after he has come to understand *virtus*, and after a second Achilles and a second Trojan war (35–6), just like that seen in the second half of the *Aeneid*. And in *Eclogues* Four, as in the *Aeneid*, exact repetition of the past is to be avoided in favour of

⁷⁰ Compare the words of Horace's old fortune teller: *simul atque adoleverit aetas* (*Satires* 1.9.34), suggesting that this was a set didactic phrase.

⁷¹ On the dynamic interplay between memory and history in the Roman world, see Flower 2003. On memory in the *Aeneid* see Seider 2013, with 161–7 on Aeneas' farewell to Ascanius.

⁷² On propaganda, family history, allegory and the use of *exempla* in the *Aeneid*, see Bowie 1990; Feeney 1986; Griffin 1985: 190–9; Horsfall 1976, 1995: 162–5; Leach 1999; Zetzel 1997.

⁷³ E.g. Livy 1.pr.3, 10, on which see Chaplin 2000; Henderson 1989; Jaeger 1997: 15–29; Moles 1993; Ogilvie 1965: 23–9; Wiseman 1986: 99. Other historians express similar desires for their readers to learn from the examples offered in their histories, e.g. Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum* 4.5–6; Tacitus, *Annals* 3.65, *Agricola* 46.3.

⁷⁴ I use the text of Mynors 1969.

an improved reworking of it that, ultimately, promises peace and prosperity.

As many scholars have noted, the *Aeneid* tells us that learning from history involves learning to do things better, to repeat the past with a difference.⁷⁵ Aeneas' exhortation in Book Twelve that his son should emulate his *virtus* and *labor* but learn *fortuna* from someone else (435–6) echoes several earlier moments in the poem where happier fates are wished for the survivors of Troy.⁷⁶ It recalls both his earlier expression of desire in Book Three that Andromache and Helenus should have 'better luck' (*melioribus ... / auspiciis*, 498–9) in escaping the Greeks at Buthrotum than they did at Troy, and the mangled spectre Deiphobus' exhortation to the hero in Book Six to find 'better fortunes' (*melioribus ... fatis*, 546) than he had in the past.⁷⁷ Most of all, however, it cements Ascanius as a figure who still, even at the end of the epic, symbolises the future and is to come into his own heroic identity only in that hazy future, not in the present in which his father wages war. Despite his role as the audience to one of the core messages of the *Aeneid*, Ascanius thus remains outside the epic action, someone to be set aside, like Dido, and defended, like the prizes which Aeneas promises him once the battle has been won.

Like the child in *Eclogues* Four, Ascanius is a beacon of hope; unlike that child, however, he has spent considerable time throughout his own epic story trying to grow up and having those attempts frustrated, as well as demonstrating a tendency to repeat the mistakes of the past rather than learn to avoid them. He still may learn the cardinal Roman virtues of manliness, toil and good luck which Aeneas sets out as his syllabus, though exactly how is unclear. To do so, Aeneas suggests, Ascanius has to look back to the past. This may mean looking back as far as Andromache in Buthrotum (a barren repetition of the past, though safe from attack by hostile forces), or beyond her to Hector (a dead hero, father to a dead son).

⁷⁵ On repetition and change in the *Aeneid*, see Feldherr 2002 on the games in Book Five, where 'the future will be just like the past only better' (63); Fitzgerald 1984; Quint 1993: 50–96.

⁷⁶ contra MacKay 1957, who states that 'the sentiment is natural enough in the mouth of Sophocles' Ajax ... but it is surprising here' (15).

⁷⁷ Aeneas' ancestors are also 'born in a better age' (*nati melioribus annis*, *Aen.* 6.649) than he.

It may also mean looking back from a moment in the future to the as-yet unreached end of the *Aeneid*, to Aeneas killing Turnus (a difficult moment itself, particularly with regard to the model for heroism it offers).⁷⁸ Wherever Ascanius is to look, however, and from whatever perspective, all these views are problematic and the process is made more difficult by the injunction to emulate the past and to deviate from it at the same time.⁷⁹ It is possible that the 'good fortune' which Aeneas holds out as a goal to his son lies still in the future as well, and that this is an almost wholly proleptic gesture towards peace and prosperity yet to be achieved.⁸⁰ In that case Ascanius really is being set an impossible task, asked to learn from the achievements of his own descendants. The issue is left unresolved, as is the implicit tension between Ascanius' innate nature as the inheritor of his Trojan father's irate heroism and the nurture offered by the Roman epic which holds out noble hopes for the future on the one hand but shows us its heroes' tendencies to regress on the other. As both an embodiment of the future and its promise, and an unfinished young hero closely connected with the Trojan past, Ascanius more than any other character in the *Aeneid* reveals the ways in which the text strives towards its goal and at the same time acknowledges that the goal, perfect Roman heroism, is rooted in impossibility. Just so, Ascanius' own goals are potentially unachievable aspirations. Always upstaged by his heroic father, he symbolises the frustrations as much as the hopes of succession. His voice, when heard, is swiftly silenced, and after Aeneas leaves to engage in his climactic encounter with Turnus, he simply vanishes.

⁷⁸ On the difficulties of the end of the *Aeneid*, particularly with respect to the character of Aeneas, see Block 1980; Bowra 1933–4; Galinsky 1988, 1994; Pascal 1990; Putnam 1981, 1984, 2001; Schlunk 1984; Stahl 1981, 1990; Thomas 2001, ch. 9; D. West 1974, 1998; Wright 1997. Goldschmidt 2013: 178 also notes the 'inconclusiveness and instability of *exemplum*' in the *Aeneid*.

⁷⁹ On the dangers of replicating the past, and being too like one's ancestors, see also Eumedes, descendant of Dolon, at *Aen.* 12.346–52.

⁸⁰ See Kennedy 1997 on repetition, the idea of a *telos* and forwards and backwards perspectives on the *Aeneid*.

CHAPTER 10
CONCLUSION

‘It lets us imagine a continuation,’ protests W. H. Auden, criticising Virgil for the partial view of Rome’s rise and fall afforded by the *Aeneid*, in which Augustus and the Augustan present are made the triumphant end of the long journey towards greatness that began when Troy fell.¹ The complaints of the twentieth-century poet focus on the way in which Roman history is presented as a prophecy to Aeneas as he labours in his mythical past. Auden dwells on the failures of Virgil’s epic, suggesting that an author who recasts known events as promises for the future is no true prophet. Lamenting that Virgil’s revelations of the ‘future’ stop on the shield presented to Aeneas in Book Eight with ‘the Octavius the world was waiting for’, Auden finds fault with the *Aeneid* because it makes no mention, for example, of the Vandals or the Goths, notorious destroyers of the empire, or the last Western emperor, Romulus Augustulus: ‘whom Arian Odovacer will depose’. His interest in Rome’s deterioration shapes a very particular response to Virgil’s epic, which he sees as a work that deals treacherously not only with history but with poetry too: ‘behind your verse so masterfully made / we hear the weeping of a Muse betrayed’.² Though he does not acknowledge it openly,³ Auden’s own decision to end the story with Rome’s takeover by Odoacer in 476 CE is as arbitrary as Virgil’s terminus with Augustus’ triumph of 31 BCE. Rome’s story did not stop in the fifth century either, though as Auden suggests ‘the [diminutive and evocative] names

¹ Auden’s poem ‘Secondary Epic’ was first published in 1959. For its influences and later publication history, see Fuller 1998: 469–70.

² The muse is unnamed, and thus represents both the muse of history, who is addressed in another poem in the same collection of Auden’s work, ‘Homage to Clio’, and the muse of epic poetry invoked in the proem to the *Aeneid*.

³ ‘The composition / of a down-at-heels refugee rhetorician’ that Auden imagines written for ‘some blond princeling’ may itself be a tacit acknowledgement of the arbitrariness and political motivations of the ends people impose on narratives.

predestined for the Catholic boy' who lost Rome to the barbarians (that is, Romulus Augustulus) make him an apt figure to mark both a terminus and a waning of power, looking back as they do to both Romulus and Augustus, celebrated by Virgil as Rome's founders, and bringing history full circle.

While we could criticise Auden for taking a partial and somewhat tendentious view of a very complex poem,⁴ he is right in one very important respect: the *Aeneid* does let us imagine all kinds of continuations, and leaves space for consideration of a variety of futures, some of them as problematic for Jupiter's prediction in Book One of boundless empire as the decline and fall Auden celebrates. Auden speaks of the dissolution of the Roman empire with the certainty of hindsight, and ends with a gloating allusion to 'the Catholic boy' he sees as the end of the line for Rome. Virgil is less obvious, but he, too, has a boy – unremarked by Auden among 'all the birthdays needed to pre-ordain ... Octavius' – a boy who, like Romulus Augustulus, has significant names and who symbolises futurity and many of its problems: Ascanius.

This book has argued that Ascanius is used repeatedly and in a variety of ways throughout the epic to gesture towards what is to come. He represents the future hopes of his father and grandfather for a royal lineage that will survive Troy's fall, as well as the hopes of Troy's survivors for a new settlement elsewhere. Through him, the poem looks also to the more distant future, the Julian family and its latest representative, the emperor Augustus, and implicitly beyond (if not all the way to Romulus Augustulus).⁵ He himself looks forward to an adult, epic future, where he can act like a man, while other characters in the narrative see in him the futures denied to their own sons, or the sons denied them. At the same time, Ascanius himself is a vulnerable figure, whose personal future, together with the future he represents, is implicitly threatened a number of times. Sometimes external forces menace him, endangering either his life or the active heroic future he has been promised and hopes for. Sometimes, too, his own innate nature seems to threaten his survival and the birth of Rome. The poem itself is also vulnerable to these threats, as

⁴ See further Hardie 2014: 116–18.

⁵ Nelis 2005: 74–5.

Virgil suggests repeatedly that the progress of his narrative is tied to Ascanius' prospects as Aeneas' heir.⁶ Thus, as we have seen, we are not allowed to forget Aeneas' other son, Silvius, who (as history tells us) will step forward as a rival to Ascanius and his family's claims to Aeneas' Italian kingdom. Lavinia, Silvius' mother, is yet another of a number of characters presented as substitutes for Ascanius, who threaten either to edge him out of the story or to turn his story into a different kind of narrative. The introduction of Lavinia and Silvius poses the risk that an epic about foundations and a long-delayed victory for the suffering Trojans could become a civil war history in which Ascanius is the losing party in the first of a number of conflicts to tear at the fabric of the city and empire his father's descendants were to found. Other characters offer different kinds of equally terminal narratives: Andromache, Dido and the Trojan women who attempt to burn the ships in Book Five all involve Ascanius in tragic stories which he might not escape alive, while his grandmother Venus introduces him to the world of erotic, bucolic poetry, far from the battles of epic: this too is a world that he has some problems escaping. And in the narrative itself, when left to pursue a career that aims at adulthood, he has trouble following in the footsteps of his heroic, warrior father, due both to his own dangerously impetuous impulses and to the intervention of paternal figures, Apollo and in particular Aeneas, who repress his development and ensure that he remains in the position of a child to the end of the epic. Ascanius is one of the few young men (and the only one of any stature in the *Aeneid*) who survives Virgil's narrative, and the future history of the *gens Iulia* demands his survival. However, as the summary above clearly shows, it is not enough to say that he symbolises merely a glorious destiny, the inexorable growth of the Roman people onwards and upwards towards world domination. The ways in which he is presented in the *Aeneid* undoubtedly gesture towards such a positive view of the future to come after Aeneas (and possibly after Augustus too), but at the same time they consistently question those futures, which are shown to be contingent, troubled, difficult to achieve and dependent as much as anything upon chance.⁷

⁶ E.g. *Aen.* 4.271–6.

⁷ Aeneas' parting words to his son include an instruction to be luckier than him: *Aen.* 12.436. See above, pp. 185–6.

Before I move to a final examination of the consequences of such a representation of Ascanius for our understanding of the *Aeneid* as a whole, I would like to turn to one last figure with whom Aeneas' Trojan son is paired and contrasted in the epic, a final potential substitute for Ascanius. As we have seen, the possibility that someone else might take his place is a consistent feature of the way Virgil presents Ascanius. Cupid, his father's half-brother, stands in for him in Carthage. Silvius, Ascanius' half-brother, waits in the underworld to replace him as the father of Alban kings. In Book Seven, Lavinia is distinguished by the same omen that marked him out as special in Book Two, and becomes a symbol of the Trojans' future in Italy, who again threatens Ascanius' somewhat doubtful place in the line of Aeneas' successors that leads to Rome. Elsewhere, Ascanius himself is a substitute, for his dead cousin Astyanax, for the son his father never had with Dido, and for his father himself: all these substitutions are marked by danger to the young prince, and by dissatisfaction. The final substitute for Ascanius, and in some ways the one most like him, is Pallas, Evander's son, whom Aeneas meets in Book Eight and brings back in Book Ten to join in the battle in which his own son had been forbidden to take part.

As with Lavinia, we first see Pallas engaged in a sacrifice by his father's side.⁸ When the Trojan ships come into view in Book Eight, moving silently up the Tiber, he alone stands firm, forbidding the other Arcadians to abandon the sacrificial rites, and rushing forward to confront the Trojans, his youthful boldness clearly marked (*audax*, 110).⁹ Though stunned to hear Aeneas' name,¹⁰ he soon speaks out to invite the hero into his father's house in a way that both emphasises his position as a son and shows him adopting adult responsibilities: already there are similarities with the ways in which Ascanius has been represented in Book Nine

⁸ *Aen.* 8.104. Cf. *Aen.* 7.72.

⁹ We might compare Ascanius rushing forward to confront the Trojan women in Book Five, though here it is notable that Pallas needs no paternal backup.

¹⁰ *obstipuit tanto percussus nomine*, *Aen.* 8.121. Cf. Aeneas struck dumb momentarily by the solution to the table-eating omen, but then acting quickly as a leader of the Trojans (*Aen.* 7.119). There are also clear parallels between the stunned Pallas and Euryalus in Book Nine, who is struck by a great love of glory (*obstipuit magno laudum percussus amore*, *Aen.* 9.197). The echo is pointed to by the adjective *Pallantea* at *Aen.* 9.196, and helps develop the building foreboding of Pallas' impending doom.

in particular.¹¹ When Evander welcomes Aeneas, he further hints at parallels between Pallas and Ascanius, speaking of his old friendship with Aeneas' father, Anchises, and suggesting that it has already begun to be repeated one generation later by Aeneas and Pallas.¹² These, it should be stressed, are not equal relationships: Anchises was older than Evander, and Evander's 'youthful desire' (*iuvenali ... amore*, 163) to take Anchises' hand closely mirrors Pallas' action earlier:

excepitque manu dextramque amplexus inhaesit (*Aeneid* 8.124)

And he took him by the hand and clung to his right hand, embracing it.

As Pallas takes Aeneas by the hand to lead him into Evander's palace, his youthful and immediate attachment to the Trojan hero is reminiscent also of the childish Ascanius attaching himself to Aeneas' right hand as they flee from Troy (*dextrae se parvus Iulus / implicuit*, *Aen.* 2.723–4). And when Evander gives Aeneas the reinforcements that he asked for, with Pallas at their head, the links between the young Arcadian and Aeneas' son become even more apparent:

'hunc tibi praeterea, spes et solacia nostri,
Pallanta adiungam: sub te tolerare magistro
militiam et grave Martis opus, tua cernere facta
aduescat, primis et te miretur ab annis.' (*Aeneid* 8.514–17)

'Besides which, I will let this young man, Pallas, attend you, my hope and consolation: let him become accustomed to the endurance of military toil and the heavy work of war under you, his guide, observing your deeds, and wonder at you from his earliest years.'

Just like Ascanius, Pallas represents the hope (*spes*, 514) of his father. And like Ascanius in Book Twelve, Pallas is instructed to learn about epic manhood by watching Aeneas. Pallas, however, will learn in the field and will not be held back from engagement in the battle as Ascanius was: he is the designated leader of the Arcadians whom Evander sends with Aeneas (519) and when Evander makes his farewell to his son, he is also clear that Pallas

¹¹ See above, pp. 154–67.

¹² Pallas, for example, now has possession of the gold pair of bits that Anchises gave Evander as a parting gift: *Aen.* 8.166–8.

is going to war, and into danger, while his aged father remains behind, unable to contribute to the fight. Pallas' situation is, then, both like and unlike Ascanius'. Differences are shown, for example, by the fact that his father is the one who weeps incessantly during their parting (*inexpletus lacrimans*, 559),¹³ and although Evander wants his son to be unharmed (*incolumem*, 575), just as Venus wished Ascanius to be,¹⁴ he does not attempt to hold him back from engagement in the epic.¹⁵

As they move off, heading back to the Trojan camp, we see further and even clearer parallels with Ascanius: Pallas is at the centre of the column, shining conspicuously, in a similar manner to the young Trojan who was compared to a shining jewel among the Trojan warriors in Book Ten.¹⁶

ipse agmine Pallas
in medio, chlamyde et pictis conspectus in armis:
qualis ubi Oceani perfusus Lucifer unda,
quem Venus ante alios astrorum diligit ignis,
extulit os sacrum caelo tenebrasque resolvit. (*Aeneid* 8.587–91)

Pallas himself, in the middle of the marching line of soldiers, was conspicuous in his cloak and colourful armour. He was like Lucifer, whom Venus loves best of all the fiery stars, as he rises from his bath in the waves of the Ocean, and lifts up his holy face in the heavens and scatters the darkness.

The details of the simile encourage the comparison. Pallas is compared to the morning star, beloved by Venus above all other stars (590), while in Book Ten we remember Ascanius had been described as 'Venus' greatest and most proper love' (*Veneris iustissima cura*, 132). At the same time, we are led to see links also between Pallas and Aeneas, who is compared to the rather more ill-omened star Sirius at *Aeneid* 10.273–5, and whose family (including Ascanius) we have seen associated with movement up towards the stars throughout the narrative.

¹³ Cf. Ascanius grieving as Aeneas prepares to go to battle, *Aen.* 12.399.

¹⁴ *Aen.* 10.47.

¹⁵ That this engagement will prove terminal for Pallas is suggested again by Evander's collapse at the end of his final speech to his son, and subsequent removal inside (584), which is later mirrored by the removal inside of Euryalus' grieving mother after news comes of his death (*Aen.* 9.500–2).

¹⁶ Cf. *ipse ... / in medio* (587–8) to *ipse inter medios* (*Aen.* 10.132).

CONCLUSION

When Pallas appears in Book Ten, his attachment to Aeneas is again made clear, as are both his similarities and vital differences to Ascanius. As they sail towards the besieged Trojan camp, Pallas is closely affixed to Aeneas' side, learning lessons of leadership and his history of sufferings, the story of the epic to date:¹⁷

Pallasque sinistro
adfixus lateri iam quaerit sidera, opacae
noctis iter, iam quae passus terraque marique. (*Aeneid* 10.160–2)

And Pallas, clinging closely on his left side, asks now about the stars and their journey through the dark night, and now about what Aeneas had suffered by land and by sea.

As Aeneas' pupil and protégé, Pallas plays the role that Aeneas encourages Ascanius to adopt during their last farewell in Book Twelve. Pallas, however, is allowed free rein to become a hero in the course of the *Aeneid* itself, a freedom which – as we have seen – is denied to Ascanius. Thus in Book Ten while Ascanius remains enclosed within the walls of the camp (236–7),¹⁸ Pallas engages in battle, exhorting his troops, in ways which mirror Aeneas' later exhortation to his soldiers in Book Twelve:¹⁹

nunc prece, nunc dictis virtutem accendit amaris:
'quo fugitis, socii? per vos et fortia facta,
per ducis Evandri nomen devictaque bella
spemque meam, patriae quae nunc subit aemula laudi,
fidite ne pedibus: ferro rumpenda per hostis
est via. qua globus ille virum densissimus urget,
hac vos et Pallanta ducem patria alta reposcit.' (*Aeneid* 10.368–74)

Now with prayer and now with bitter words he fired their manhood.
'Where are you fleeing? You are allies, remember. In the name of that status, and your brave deeds, in the name of your leader Evander and the wars he resoundingly won, in the name of my own hope, which now rises up emulous of my father's glory: don't pin your hopes on flight; we

¹⁷ That Pallas is asking for a narration of the *Aeneid* is hinted at particularly by reference to Aeneas as a hero who has suffered (*passus*, 162), which echoes the well-known description of Aeneas in the proem (*Aen.* 1.5).

¹⁸ He only comes out after Pallas is dead: *Aen.* 10.604–5.

¹⁹ Pallas: *quo fugitis, socii?* (*Aen.* 10.369); Aeneas: *quo ruitis?* (*Aen.* 12.313). Also compare the mature Mnesteus: *quo deinde fugam? quo tenditis?* (*Aen.* 9.781), and Pallas' earlier question to the Trojans (*quo tenditis?*, *Aen.* 8.113), with Ascanius' similar question to the Trojan women (*quo nunc, quo tenditis?*, *Aen.* 5.670).

must break a way through the enemy by the sword. Where that mass of men presses most thickly, there your great fatherland summons you, and Pallas as your leader.'

As Pallas speaks of his own hopes to prove himself a man by winning praise in war as his father had done, and makes it clear that he seeks to rival his father's glory, we see a clear articulation of the desire to achieve adulthood and glory that we were told Ascanius felt on the hunt in Carthage.²⁰ Once more, however, we are reminded of Pallas' greater maturity. Not only is he actually engaged in war, where Ascanius only hoped to participate in an exciting and dangerous hunt, but he explicitly calls himself a leader (*Pallanta ducem*, 374), marking his emulation of his father, the previous leader of the Arcadians (*ducis Evandri*, 370). His speech, too, urges his men to break through the troops that surround them, while – as noted above – Ascanius is characterised throughout Book Ten, as being enclosed.²¹ And in addition, Pallas speaks of his own hope (*spemque meam*, 371) to achieve glory, which again casts him as a more adult version of Ascanius, who represents the hopes of others throughout much of the epic.²²

As a more adult Ascanius, Pallas is empowered to kill people, and not just by shooting an arrow. He comes up against a number of Italian warriors, including two with significant Trojan names:

tum Pallas biiugis fugientem Rhoetea praeter
traicit. hoc spatium tantumque morae fuit Ilo;
Ilo namque procul validam derexerat hastam,
quam medius Rhoeteus interceptit (*Aeneid* 10.399–402)

Then Pallas pierced Rhoeteus as he fled past in his chariot. Ilus had this much time, and just so much a reprieve, for it was at Ilus that he had aimed his trusty spear from afar, which Rhoeteus got in the way of as he came between them.

Rhoeteus' name evokes Cape Rhoeteum near Troy, and Ilus' name is obviously very Trojan too: it is in fact the same name that

²⁰ *Aen.* 4.158–9.

²¹ This is also a feature of the jewel simile describing his appearance on the walls, discussed above, pp. 131–44.

²² The 'hopes of Ascanius' own hopes, though they could also be Aeneas' hopes for his son's future.

Ascanius used to bear before being renamed Iulus by Jupiter in Book One.²³ The Trojanness of the names is highlighted both by their proximity and by the fact that each name is repeated: this is no coincidence.²⁴ On the one hand it adds to the confusions of the battles in the second half of the *Aeneid*, where the Trojans and their new enemies are strikingly similar: Italians bear Trojan-sounding names and vice versa, and the strife between Trojans and Italians who are soon to become one people is a precursor to the civil wars that are to become so prominent a part of Rome's history. On the other, it further hints at Pallas' potential to write Ascanius out of the picture, as he kills his namesake,²⁵ an act highlighted by the small cluster of significantly Trojan names among the list of Pallas' victims here. Very soon after this passage, we are again made to think of Troy, as Pallas is compared to a herdsman looking down upon fires spread across the plains (405–9). Though in this simile the herdsman has set the fires deliberately and rejoices, it nonetheless serves as another link between Pallas and Aeneas, who was also compared to a herdsman (though a deeply troubled one) hearing the noise of fires sweeping across the plains below in Book Two, as he realised that Troy was falling (304–8).

Repeatedly, then, Virgil associates Pallas with Aeneas, presenting him as his pupil and thus a successor to his military prowess and heroic stature. Several times in this process, we are explicitly reminded of Ascanius, whom the *Aeneid* does not allow to follow too closely in Aeneas' heroic footsteps, and we see Pallas not only as an Aeneas-in-training but also as a replacement of sorts for Aeneas' Trojan son. Pallas soon dies at the hands of Turnus, which might make us feel that the forces working throughout the *Aeneid* to suppress and retard Ascanius' achievement of heroic adulthood were justified. Certainly, Pallas' death is strongly associated with the message that many heroes die young,²⁶ and Ascanius' survival, as well as

²³ *Aen.* 1.268.

²⁴ *contra* Harrison 1990, *ad Aen.* 10.399–400, who discusses ways in which the Trojanness of the names might be mitigated (they could, he suggests, be seen as 'generally heroic').

²⁵ The blow is slightly softened by the fact that Pallas' killing of Ilus is implied, but never described.

²⁶ E.g. Jupiter's reminder to Hercules, grieving because he cannot help Pallas, that his son Sarpedon died at Troy, and that Turnus will die soon too (*Aen.* 10.467–72). Cf. also the scenes on Pallas' baldric and its ill omen for Turnus (*Aen.* 10.495–505).

his father's dominance in the epic, may necessitate the suppression of his bellicose youthful instincts. Nonetheless, it remains true that in Pallas Aeneas has found a surrogate son, who emphasises the fact that Ascanius is determinedly sidelined from the epic narrative.

We see Pallas' dominance even more clearly once he has died, when thoughts of the young Arcadian and his elderly father fill Aeneas' mind and seem to blot out his view of anything else (*Pallas, Evander, in ipsis / omnia sunt oculis*, 515–16). Significantly, it is at this point that we are told that a plea for mercy made 'in the name of the ghost of Anchises and of hopes for the growing Ascanius' (*per patrios manes et spes surgentis Iuli*, 524) is in vain. Aeneas' reply claims that the rules of engagement have changed now that Pallas is dead (532–3), and he suggests that Anchises and Ascanius agree with him (*hoc patris Anchisae manes, hoc sentit Iulus*, 534). However, despite the fact that the plea also included a somewhat dubious attempt at bribery, it is striking that an appeal to the *pietas* of the famously *pious* Aeneas fails to take effect here.²⁷ Pallas overwhelms everything and Aeneas' grief at his loss sends him on a killing spree that fills much of the rest of Book Ten. This grief leads to the taking of prisoners for human sacrifice, and notoriously motivates Aeneas to kill the suppliant Turnus at the end of the epic. The conclusion to the oration he makes at Pallas' funeral again makes his sorrow plain:

'at non, Evandre, pudendis
vulneribus pulsum aspicias nec sospite dirum
optabis nato funus pater. ei mihi, quantum
praesidium Ausonia, et quantum tu perdis, Iule!' (*Aeneid* 11.55–8)

'But you, Evander, will not see your son driven back and shamefully wounded, nor – with your son safe and sound – will you, a father, long for a terrible death. To my great sorrow, what a bulwark have you lost, Italy, and you, Ascanius!'

There is some debate as to the exact nature of the relationship between Aeneas and Pallas,²⁸ but its closeness and importance is indisputable, and it is undeniably given more prominence in the last books of the *Aeneid* than that between Aeneas and Ascanius.

²⁷ R. A. Smith 2005: 152–9. A similar plea in the name of *pietas* at *Aen.* 10.597–8 also fails.

²⁸ Oliensis 1997: 309.

Pallas, as a young hero taken into Aeneas' care, has opportunities to follow in Aeneas' footsteps which are never offered to the hero's own son. Notably, too, when Aeneas stresses Pallas' laudable heroic achievements (he was not routed, or wounded in the back, nor did he survive through some shameful act such as might drive his father to suicide), he once more brings an unheroic Ascanius explicitly to mind. Pallas is presented as a potential bulwark for Italy, and for Ascanius, and not only do we see the Arcadian youth presented as a worthy young warrior who could act to defend his country,²⁹ but also the Trojan child represented as being in need of defence, rather than being capable of defending himself.³⁰ While Ascanius is still seen as a future ruler in Italy, it is nonetheless Pallas who plays the active, manly role in Aeneas' imagined (if impossible) continuation of his son's story.

Left behind to the end of the epic, though never completely elided, Virgil's Ascanius proves incapable of escaping his childishness, despite his desire to do so and multiple attempts to grow up. Comparisons with the other young characters in the epic not only emphasise his survival but also the price that is paid to ensure it: the frustration, at least for the duration of Virgil's narrative, of his natural wish for progress. It is often noted that the *Aeneid* shows us that one of the major sacrifices made to ensure Rome's future glory is that many young men die.³¹ In the figure of Ascanius, however, we also see that this is not the only sacrifice made in the text: paradoxically, the young character who above all symbolises the future, and who is allowed to live to enjoy it, cannot move into his own future within the narrative time of the epic. This is not only because his father has to remain the dominant

²⁹ Cf. Hector, for example, the defender of Troy, a role encapsulated in his son Astyanax's name (see pp. 51–2 above). For *praesidium*, an unpoetic word, see Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, on its use by Horace, *Odes* 1.1.2, who note that 'it describes, for instance, the protection a man gives his wife and family'. It can also be used of a son's support of his (aged) parents, as at Seneca, *ad Marciam de Consolatione* 17.1. The suggestion that Pallas and his country are like family further highlights his similarity to Ascanius, whose countrymen view him as his father does (or should): the hope of their future.

³⁰ Cf. Aeneas' promise to Ascanius in Book Twelve, 'my right hand will provide you with defence in war' (*nunc te mea dextera bello / defensum dabit*, 436–7).

³¹ Hardie 1997.

hero in the poem named after him (the *Odyssey* provides a model in which a son's coming of age is a significant strand in his father's story, and Telemachus is allowed to participate in Odysseus' epic experiences much more fully than Aeneas' son is ever permitted to do in the *Aeneid*). Nor is it simply because if Ascanius were to be allowed to grow up enough to engage properly in his father's battles he might be killed, though that is clearly an important consideration, and tied to concerns about Aeneas' own troublingly irate heroism and its inheritance. Rather, Ascanius' future is held in abeyance because its achievement is more problematic than it first appears. Among a number of complicating factors, including the fact that there are rival heirs to his father's throne, is his own innate Trojanness, which brings to light an essential aspect of the peculiar way in which the Romans looked at the future.

Just as Ascanius is not able to leave his childishness behind, he is also incapable of escaping his association with Troy. Numanus Remulus reminds him pointedly of his Trojanness in Book Nine,³² and Aeneas speaks of the Trojan Hector as a potential model for Ascanius in his putative adulthood in Book Twelve.³³ The *lusus Troiae* which Ascanius is to introduce to Italy imports Troy to the heart of Rome,³⁴ and even his names evoke a Trojan identity while also gesturing towards a Roman future. His character has an impulse to grow and move forward, and represents a more general urge in the text to move on from Troy towards Rome, although it is important to note also that Troy is never abandoned or wholly forgotten, despite Juno's desires for a *damnatio memoriae*.³⁵ However, the figure of Ascanius, at times too like his father, also reveals the forces that endanger and delay such progress, which include the threat that too much of the past might be imported into the future, and the future thus become a repetition of past losses, without the hope of change. Ascanius is a figure who makes us look backwards as well as forwards, and who encourages us to confront some of the more troubling issues related to moving into the future, particularly within a culture like Rome's that saw its

³² *Aen.* 9.598–620.

³³ *Aen.* 12.440.

³⁴ *Aen.* 5.596–602.

³⁵ *occidit, occideritque sinas cum nomine Troia*, *Aen.* 12.828.

future as modelled on the past. In Rome, and in Ascanius' *Aeneid*, the past is inescapable and a significant force both in the present and in what is to come next. Virgil's representation of Aeneas' son illuminates the problems with such a world view. A future predicated on repetition of the past (even with crucial variations) may very well stumble and hesitate on its journey forwards just as Ascanius does as he follows imperfectly in his father's footsteps. And an understanding of history as the inexorable unfolding of destiny is untenable, because the future is always indeterminate and possibly imperfect, like Ascanius.

Virgil's Rome, of course, does eventuate, and the forward march of history is unstoppable. His Ascanius, however, demonstrates that each step in that progress is not necessarily as assured as it might seem. This too is deliberate. A different *Aeneid* could have given Ascanius a complete initiation to adulthood, proved that he had inherited his father's noble virtues, developed self-control, and was luckier than Aeneas as the hero had hoped, and even smoothed over the potential problems between Ascanius and his Italian step-family. But a different *Aeneid* could also have ended with a scene of peaceful reconciliation between the Trojans and Italians, rather than with an enraged Aeneas, a violent death and Turnus' soul fleeing moaning to the shades. The uncertainties associated with Virgil's Ascanius, I argue, mirror the uncertainties of the *Aeneid* itself. His character can be thought of as a symbol for the text, which looks forward to Rome from its opening lines, but never really gets there. His fate throughout the *Aeneid*, which not only denies him a fully fledged epic career but also presents him with a number of other narrative paths, mirrors the poem itself, which yearns towards an unachieved end, moving slowly and with multiple digressions towards an abrupt close that leaves a number of questions about the future unanswered. Ascanius' close association with the narrative is clear early on, when he is made to symbolise Jupiter's dictation of the plot in Book One, and remains significant as he is intimately involved in the *Aeneid*'s new beginnings in Book Seven, persisting to the end, despite the introductions of rivals to his position as his father's heir. In Book Twelve he is presented to us as a model pupil, when he is told to learn from the troubling story the *Aeneid* has told.

Ascanius' is not a well-developed character: he is marked by impetuous youth, beauty, vulnerability and frustration, rather than by growth. He remains a strangely tenuous figure despite his indubitable importance as the ancestor of the *gens Iulia* and although he appears consistently throughout the narrative he does not contribute a great deal directly to its progress. As I suggested at the beginning of this book, however, it is Ascanius' lack of development and absence of agency that holds the real answer to his function in Virgil's narrative. Frustrated himself, he is a figure for the frustrations of a text characterised above all by delay. Frequently endangered, he exposes the multiple dangers that threaten the development both of the *Aeneid* and of the Roman race and future which the *Aeneid* promises. Seen through a number of competing viewpoints, he demonstrates the multiple perspectives the epic offers. As a youthful and somewhat imperfect replica of his father, he holds up a mirror to Aeneas' failings, which include not only a propensity for lack of restraint and anger but also a tendency to dominate in ways that repress other voices. And standing as a symbol of hope for the future, closely aligned to other young figures like Marcellus, Astyanax, Pallas and Lausus, he reminds us of the inexorable and – from a human perspective – unknowable workings of fate, on which even the great Roman empire cannot securely rely. Ascanius in the *Aeneid* is a troubling figure, but he is suited to the troubled times in which Virgil wrote, when the succession to Augustus was undetermined, Rome's ability to move on from years of civil war unclear, and, as Evander says in relation to Pallas, Ascanius' doomed double, 'hope of the future uncertain'.³⁶

³⁶ *spes incerta futuri*, *Aen.* 8.580.

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